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HISTORY'S
GREATEST WARRIORS

Human history has all too often been scarred by violence, episodes of savagery that have provided skilled warriors with the opportunity to change the course of events. The crucible of war has given rise to the legacies of ferocious fighters such as Cassius Scaeva, who lost an eye yet fought on under a shower of arrows, William Marshal, a medieval knight who waged war for five English monarchs, and Michel Ney, Napoleon's recklessly brave cavalryman.

In this bookazine you'll discover how some of the most formidable soldiers of antiquity honed their skills and slashed their way into the annals. You will also have the chance to immerse yourself in the methods of armies from ancient Rome to Mongolia, walk through the carnage of bloody battlefields and see some of history's most lethal weapons from the sharp end. Let battle commence!

FUTURE

GREATEST WARRIORS

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

Bookazine Editorial
Editor **Charles Ginger**
Designer **Perry Wardell-Wicks**
Compiled by **April Madden & Madelene King**
Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**
Head of Art & Design **Greg Whitaker**
Editorial Director **Jon White**

Magazine Editorial
Editor **Jonathan Gordon**
Designer **Kym Winters**
Editorial Director **Timothy Williamson**
Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crooks**

Cover images
Jean-Michel Girard
The Art Agency

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

International
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
licensing@futurenet.com
www.futurecontenthub.com

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Matthew Eglinton**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Managers **Keely Miller, Nola Cokely,**
Vivienne Calvert, Fran Twentyman

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Chief executive **Zillah Byng-Thorne**
Non-executive chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief financial officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

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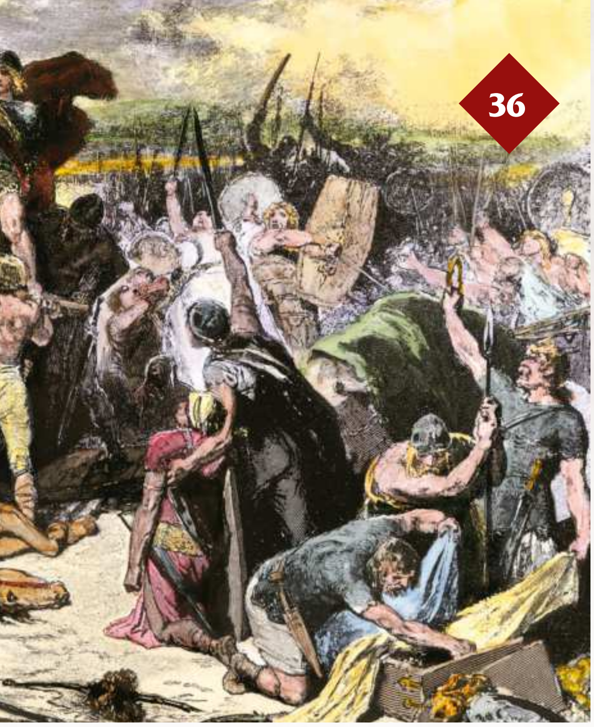

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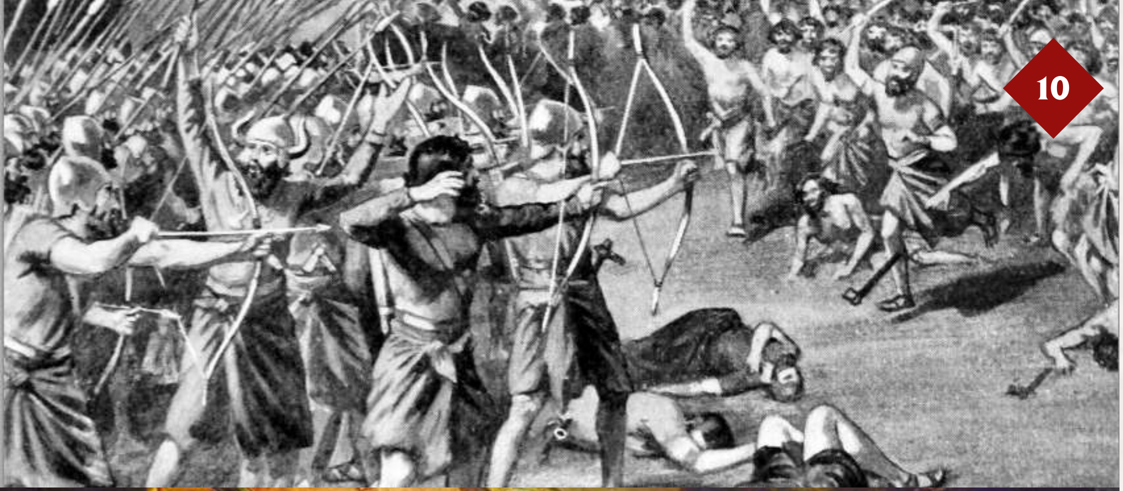
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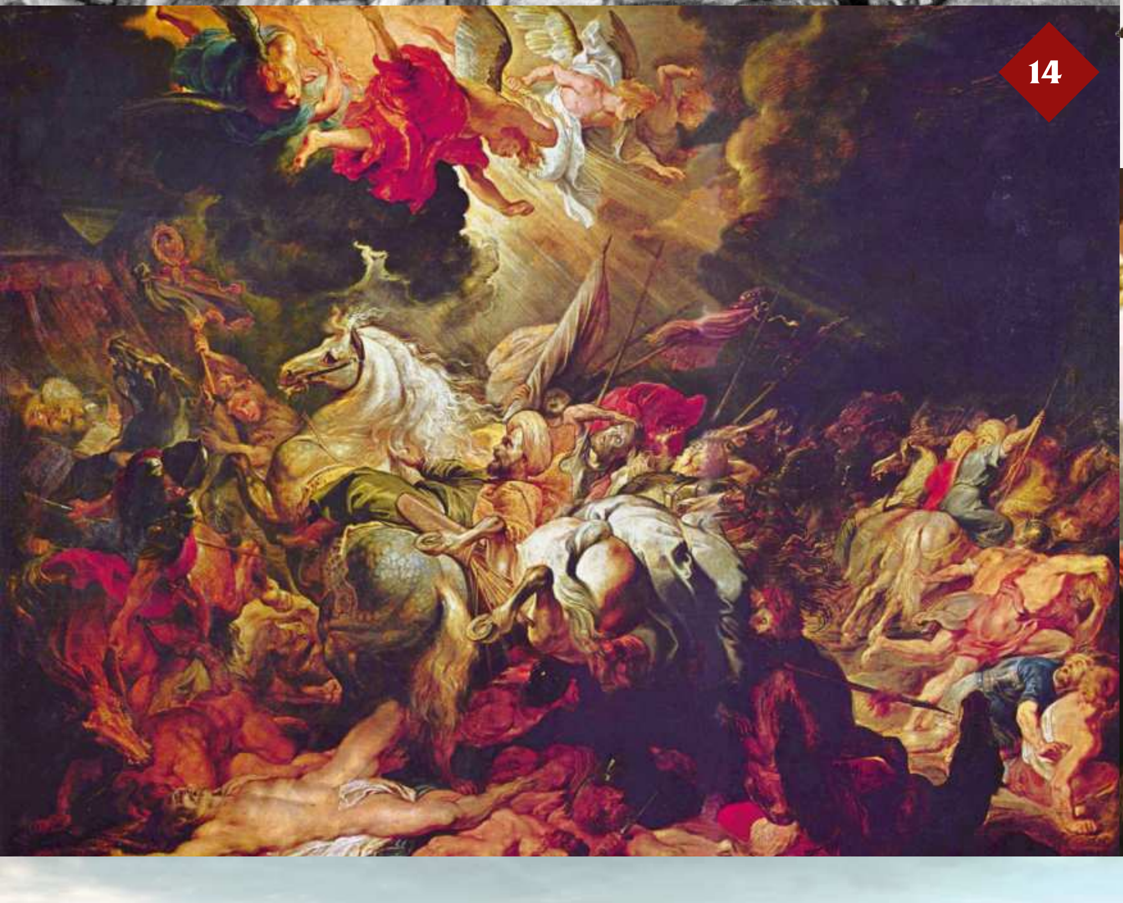
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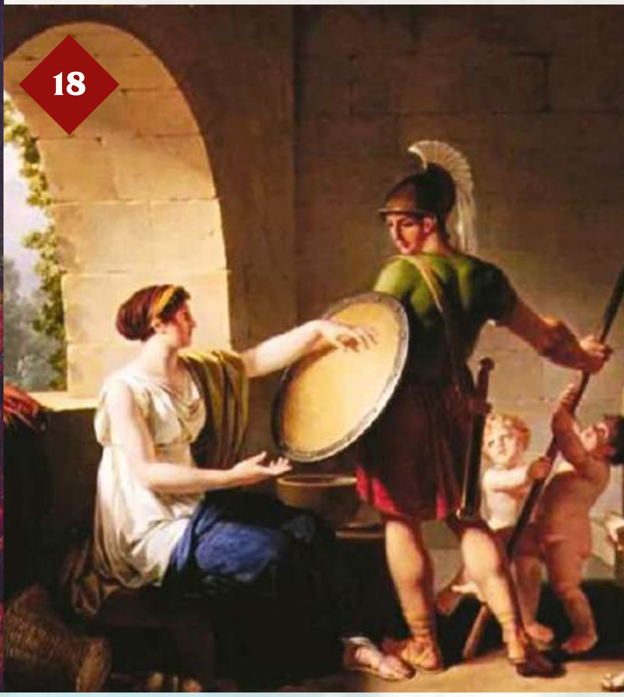
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AKKADIANS AT WAR

HOW THE AKKADIAN EMPIRE REVOLUTIONISED WARFARE TO CREATE AN UNSTOPPABLE FIGHTING FORCE

Written by Frances White

Considering the immense power it wielded and influence it held over the world, it's surprising how the city of Akkad is steeped in mystery. Nobody knows exactly where it was located, how it rose to become so prominent, or even the exact circumstances of its fall. Yet despite all this, Akkad was once the seat of what is largely regarded as one of the first true empires in history.

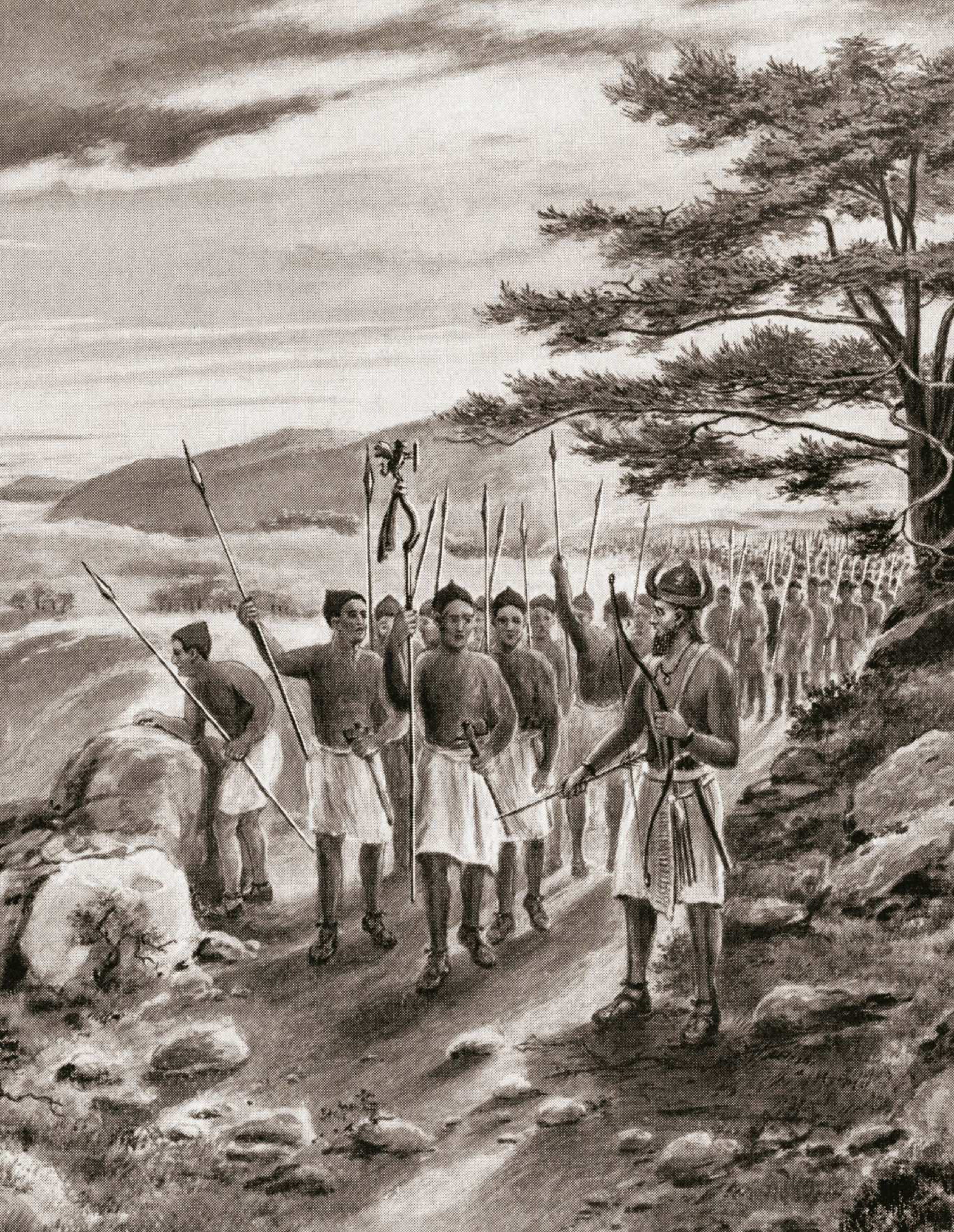
It was under the leadership of Sargon the Great, a man as steeped in legend as Akkad itself, that the Akkadian Empire began to bloom, flourish and conquer. In the 24th century BCE, ancient Mesopotamia was divided between the powerful Sumerians in the south and the developing Akkadians in the north. Having ousted the previous king, Ur-Zababa of Zish, Sargon was soon challenged by the most powerful king in Sumer, Lugal-Zaggesi. Lugal-Zaggesi had managed to unite the warring city-states of Sumer into a kind of empire. However, in a shock result, Sargon defeated the mighty king. While doing so he captured a large number of Sumer's most important leaders. After being greatly underestimated, Sargon set his sights on bringing all of Sumer and beyond under his control.

Sargon continued his great military conquest and marched against Ur, then from Lagash to the Lower Sea. Sargon conquered his way from the Persian Gulf and captured the last stronghold of his enemies, the city of Umma. Although Sargon's conquest began with Sumer, it grew rapidly, stretching to Syria and the Taurus Mountains in modern-day Italy.

Ancient Mesopotamia was not unfamiliar with conquerors; it had been conquered before. However, these 'empires' never usually spread beyond Sumer and were very quickly ended with the death of the conqueror. But the Akkadian Empire was different; its land stretched far beyond anything that had been conquered before and would go on to not only outlive Sargon himself but actually thrive for nearly two centuries.

So how did Sargon achieve this? And what did he put in place to ensure it would not crumble after his death? One man's tenacity and skill can only extend so far, and as committed as Sargon was to extending his power, he was even more dedicated to ensuring his empire would survive for generations to come. His most impressive innovation, and arguably the most significant contribution to his success, was the unstoppable Akkadian war machine he created during his reign.

It is said that over 50 years of ruling, Sargon fought in 34 wars and amassed a core military force of around 5,400 men. Although this number



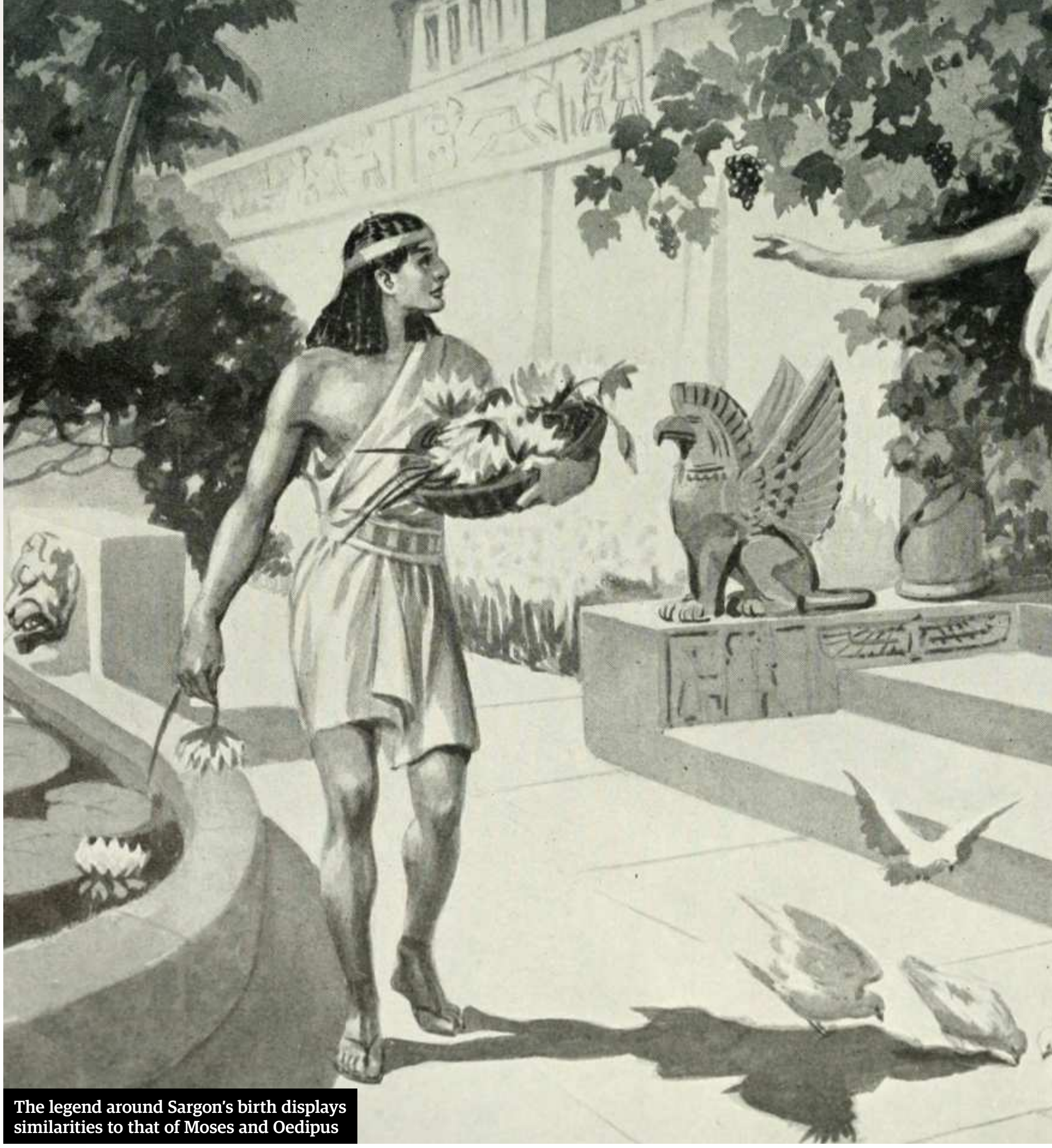
THE GREAT EMPIRE BUILDER

Sargon the Great did not always enjoy the trappings of royalty; the future conqueror had a very humble beginning. Sargon's mother was likely a temple priestess, and the identity of his father remains unknown. The legend goes that, unable to keep the baby, his mother sent Sargon adrift in a reed basket on the Euphrates River. He was found by the gardener of the King of Kish, who made Sargon his cup-bearer when he came of age before promoting him to a position of leadership as a young man. Sargon would learn many valuable lessons during his time serving the king.

Years later, when Sargon had claimed the many cities of Sumer, he installed his own trusted men in each one to keep them under his control. He continued to conquer territory after territory, taking Elam (Iran), Mari, Asher, parts of Syria, Lebanon and Anatolia (Turkey). With all of Mesopotamia under his control, Sargon set about building the city of Akkad.

The key to Sargon's control over his expansive empire was placing people he trusted in positions of power. He made his own daughter the priestess of Inanna, a powerful role that allowed her to influence religious and political affairs for over 40 years. Because of the tight power network, any rebellions were promptly squashed. Sargon was not just power hungry, however; his reign also oversaw the creation of roads and irrigation canals in his cities. Trade flourished, as did science and the arts. He even created a form of postage system and was popular for his fair taxes. After his death in 2284 BCE, the legendary status of Sargon saw him revered like a god.

This bronze head is thought to represent either Sargon or Naram-Sin



The legend around Sargon's birth displays similarities to that of Moses and Oedipus

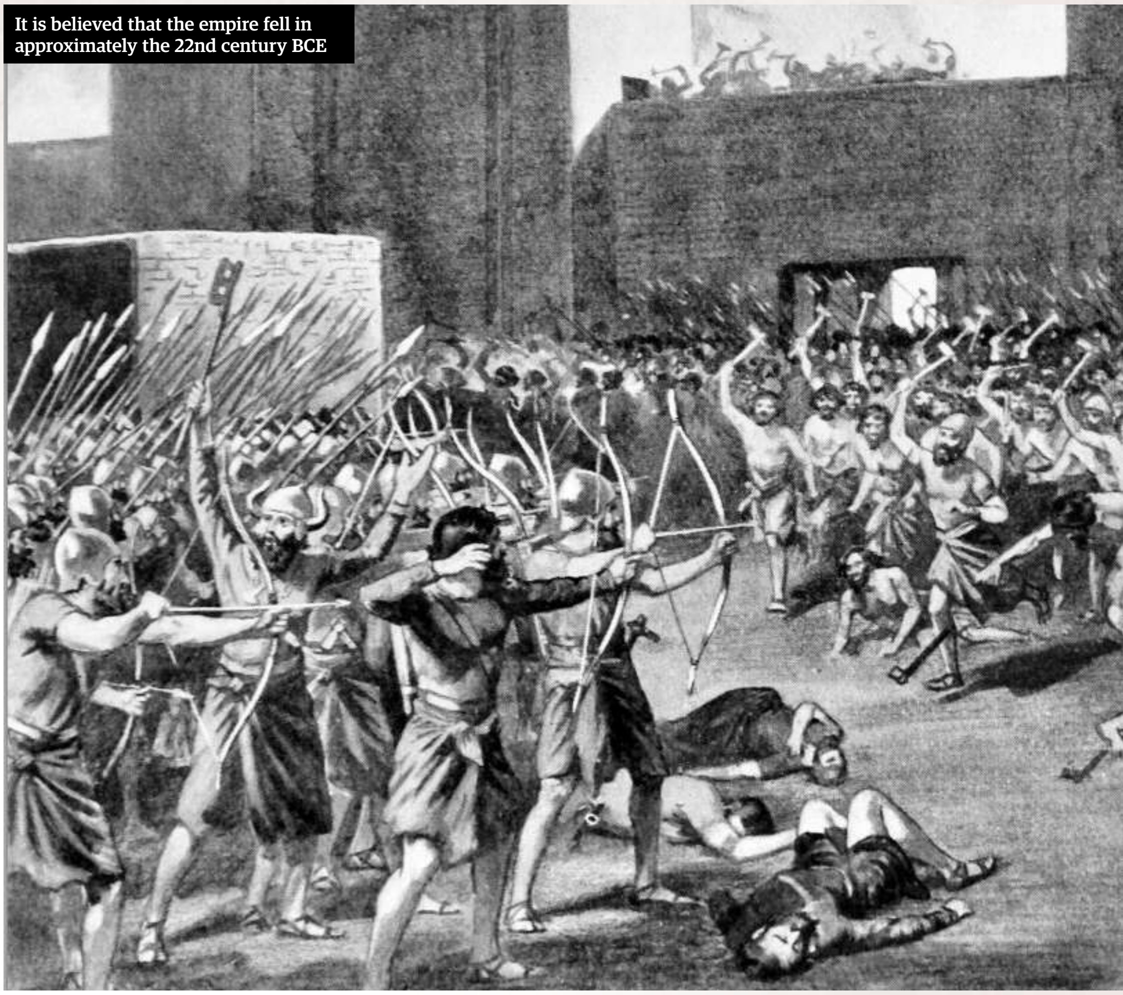
does not sound impressive today, in ancient Mesopotamia it constituted a massive force, one commonly believed to have been the first professional standing army in history.

Before Sargon, the typical Sumerian city would have armies comprised of militia troops: regular, paid armies just didn't exist. Instead, every able-bodied male was seen as a potential soldier and could be called to arms if his king demanded it. Apart from the palace guard (comprising less than 1,000 men), these cities did not have professional soldiers to summon when war broke out. If an army did need to be assembled, an average Sumerian city could assemble a force of approximately 7,000 men. When you factor in troops needed for transportation, garrisoning positions and those who inevitably deserted, the actual force a Sumerian city could call upon in times of war was roughly 5,000, of which maybe only 20 per cent were trained professionals. This method actually worked well for so long because it meant no Sumerian city was significantly more powerful than another, and domination of one neighbour over another was rare. On several occasions Sumerian cities would team up to create a larger force to take down an enemy. It was all about numbers.

Sargon, however, scrutinised this system and worked out that if he wanted not only to conquer but to hold onto his new lands, he would need to create a trained, professional standing army, one that no city-state could hope to best. With such a large empire to maintain, a huge standing army of over 5,000 wasn't just a desire, it was necessary.

In order to swell the ranks of his professional army it is likely Sargon poured the armies of his conquered cities into his own. Maintaining an army of this size also required a high degree of military organisation, administration and logistics. Sargon was skilled in these areas and also delegated this work to many of his trusted advisors and leaders. It is also likely that Sargon diverted some of the privileges enjoyed by the Sumerian temples towards this cause, ensuring that workers and materials were transferred away from the temples and instead into his armies. This method paid dividends, as the resulting armies ensured peace was maintained and provided a boon to the regional economies of his cities.

However, it wasn't just the size and training of the Akkadian armies that made them superior; it was also their techniques and the weapons they were armed with. One of the most significant innovations was the use of the composite bow. It is difficult to pin down exactly when the bow began to be used, but it was likely during the reign of Sargon's grandson, the great Naram-Sin. Similar to



It is believed that the empire fell in approximately the 22nd century BCE

“THE COMPOSITE BOW SOON BECAME CRUCIAL, WITH ARMIES IN THE REGION STILL RELYING ON IT 1,500 YEARS LATER”

his grandfather, Naram-Sin was an accomplished conqueror, and in one of the statues celebrating his victory he is armed with a composite bow, which is the first recorded appearance of the deadly weapon in history.

The reason the bow was so important and impressive was due to the devastation it could inflict. While the ordinary bow could kill at distances from 46 to 91 metres, it was not able to penetrate armour from this range. The composite bow, however, was made from wood, horn and animal sinew and boasted two to three times the pull power of a normal wooden bow. Not only could the arrows shot from it travel double the distance of an ordinary bow, but they could also penetrate leather armour. It is possible the power of the composite bow was so great that it could even penetrate bronze armour, which was being developed at the time.

While the normal bow required a great degree of skill to kill with, the composite bow could be deadly even in the hands of an untrained archer. To put it simply, Akkadians armed with composite bows against an army equipped with normal ones would have been akin to bringing guns to a knife fight. The composite bow soon became crucial, with armies in the region still relying on it 1,500 years later.

Not only did Akkad have the biggest numbers and the best-trained soldiers, but now, with the bow, it was blessed with superior weapons. The Akkadian war machine was well oiled and deadly, its armies highly trained and professional, a huge advantage when pitted against the poorly armed and untrained skirmishers that made up the bulk of other nations’ armies.

Sargon’s relentless lust for power and control was backed up by his impressive administration and strategic skills. His nation’s innovation in establishing an army that was comprised of skilled, trained men rather than a militia was hugely influential, not only for his own reign but for countless conquerors who would follow for millennia after him.

Enheduanna, Sargon’s daughter, was the first named author in the history of the world

THE ASSYRIAN WAR MACHINE

DISCOVER THE GREATEST ARMY OF THE IRON AGE MIDDLE EAST AND HOW IT ALMOST CAPTURED JERUSALEM

The Assyrian Empire originated on the upper Tigris River between the cities of Nimrud, Nineveh and Ashur in what is now known as the northwest of Iraq. The geo-strategic position of its mainland was somewhat precarious, because the area lacked wood and usable stone for construction purposes, as well as iron ore for the production of weapons and steppes to breed horses. The topography provided no natural barriers for invaders, meaning if Assyria wanted to survive it had to conquer its neighbours.

In the 9th century BCE it expanded its territory extensively and emerged as the dominant power of the Middle East. 100 years later, Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BCE) seized the Assyrian crown and killed the royal family. Not only was he an excellent administrative and military reformer but a gifted general who conquered most of the Middle East.

The Assyrian army was the major instrument facilitating this expansion. Tiglath-Pileser reformed the army, providing it with a strong backbone of professional, full-time soldiers supported by contingents from conquered realms. Commanding a standing army, the Assyrians were able to wage war all year long and to field a force of 150,000 to 200,000 soldiers.

This army was the first to be mainly equipped with iron weapons and armour. Iron metallurgy had probably been invented by the Hittites around 1300 BCE and had spread in the following centuries. Compared with bronze, iron was a superior material because cold forging created stronger and more reliable arms.

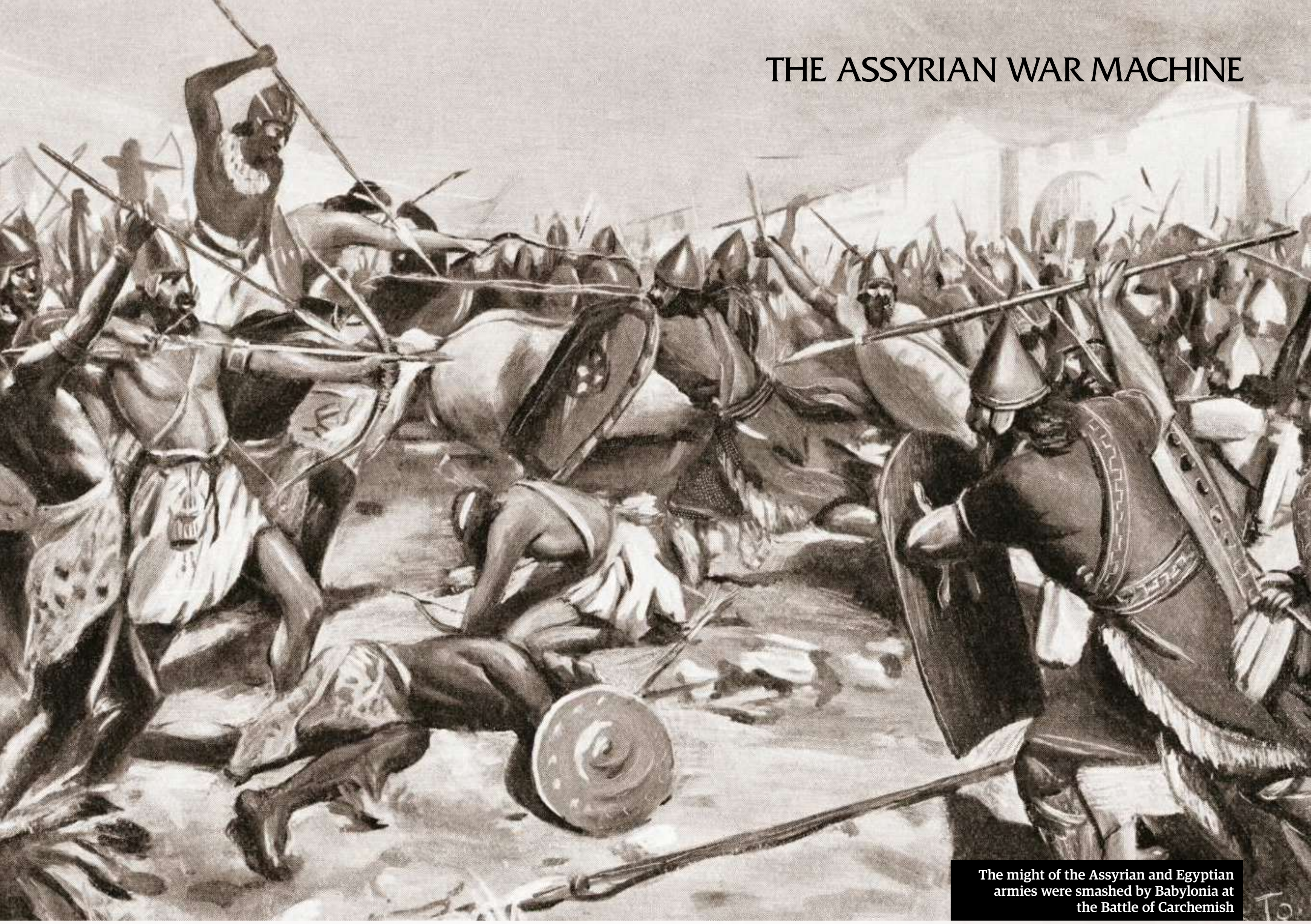
A few centuries later, the discovery of tempering made iron the best material for arms production. The widespread availability of iron ore decreased production costs, making it even more attractive. Even minor powers were able to muster and equip formidable armies with affordable weapons. It's no wonder that wars then became much more frequent, and the Assyrians were the first to fully exploit the possibilities of this new Iron Age.

The ancient Assyrians fielded a complex combined-arms fighting force consisting of infantry, chariots, cavalry, sappers and auxiliaries. The king acted as supreme commander and usually led the campaigns. The heavy infantrymen provided the bulk of the army, supported by archers, slingers and shield bearers. The archers were considered as particularly dangerous because their iron arrowheads easily penetrated enemy armour, while the invention of the quiver increased their shot frequency immensely.

Cavalry and war chariots formed elite forces. Chariots were manned by a driver, an archer and a shield bearer. If the terrain was suitable they were deployed as shock troops against the enemy's infantry ranks. When mounted archers were introduced in the 9th century BCE the cavalry became increasingly important.

The difficult terrain of the Levant reduced the efficiency of these chariots, paving the way for the cavalry as the new heart of the Assyrian offence. In the 7th century BCE, the cavalry had developed into a heavily armed and protected combat troop. The horses represented a high strategic value, which is why the Assyrians invested a lot of effort and resources into breeding, feeding and training.

In open battles, the heavy infantry - joined by archers, slingers and shield bearers - took the centre of the Assyrian line, with cavalry and chariot forces being deployed at the flanks. The battle formation was more than 2,000 metres long and almost 100 metres deep. The archers and slingers usually opened the battle with long-range shots. Afterwards, the chariots and cavalry pushed forward - the chariots were supposed to crash through the enemy's lines, while the cavalry was to exploit the breaches and roll up the enemy. Afterwards, the infantry would deal the final blow.



The might of the Assyrian and Egyptian armies were smashed by Babylonia at the Battle of Carchemish

"THE ASSYRIANS WERE ABLE TO WAGE WAR ALL YEAR LONG AND TO FIELD A FORCE OF 150,000 TO 200,000 SOLDIERS"

These armies also excelled in the art of siege warfare. A typical siege began with a complete lockdown of the targeted city, then the generals examined the defence systems and searched for weak spots – usually the city gates. The besieger first prepared huge earth ramps at the identified points to overcome the glacis and then put the siege engines to work. Mounted on wheels, these consisted of a battering ram with an iron pike and a siege tower, the top of which was covered by hides that were kept wet in order to prevent the tower from catching fire. The tower was manned by archers bombarding the walls with arrows.

Psychosocial warfare also played a part: the Assyrians were infamous for their brutality after capturing a defiant city. This meant that even the sight of an Assyrian army taking position in front of a city sufficed to make its inhabitants surrender. To control the lands he conquered, the Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser III, introduced mass deportation as a regular policy, thereby removing the enemy's elite – the most likely to instigate a rebellion. Areas that had been politically decapitated in such a way were easier to rule.

THE HEBREW KINGDOMS

In the 9th century BCE, the Assyrian Empire became a regional great power of the Middle East and expanded towards the Levant. King Shalmaneser III (859-824 BCE) conducted 21 campaigns during his reign of 35 years, establishing the Assyrian dominance from Babylon to the coast of the Mediterranean. At that time, the small city states and kingdoms of the Levant experienced a period of political power and economic wealth. Among those Levantine realms were the Hebrew kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the land of today's state of Israel.

Under the legendary rule of kings David and Solomon in the 10th century BCE a unified kingdom had formed. However, at the end of the century they separated: Israel in the north with its capital, Samaria (today's Sebastiya in the West Bank), was ruled by changing dynasties, whereas Judah in the south was controlled from Jerusalem by the descendants of David.

Most of the time, both kingdoms were fighting each other, with Israel usually dominating due to a larger population and better agricultural conditions than Judah. But both kingdoms prospered in the 9th century, and the territorial expansion of the Assyrians was an existential threat looming over the Levant. A military confrontation remained an inevitability – it was simply a case of when.

Israel and Judah both probably commanded small standing armies, however, their methods of recruitment and organisation are obscure. It's likely the armies mainly consisted of infantry supported by a limited number of chariots and cavalry units. The infantry were armed with javelins, swords and shields and accompanied by archers and slingers.

For small kingdoms like Israel and Judah, it was essential to form military alliances against great powers – they rarely conducted major offensive campaigns by themselves. Most military activities focused on the preparation for sieges and the construction of fortifications. First and foremost, securing the water supply was essential to survival. Springs often originated outside the city walls, making the construction of elaborate water systems essential. The Israelites and Judeans dug immense tunnel systems to secure their access to springs. Visitors to the sites of Megiddo, Hazor and Jerusalem (in today's Israel) have long marvelled at the effort and the advanced engineering skills that the ancient people of the cities invested in those infrastructure projects.

The city walls, constructed of worked ashlar blocks (or mud bricks dating back to the Bronze Age) on a steep artificial mound (glacis) were also an important factor. In the early Iron Age they had consisted of nothing more than the outfacing walls of private dwellings. In the 10th century, however, casemate walls prevailed - a kind of rampart that had two parallel walls with intersections. The space between the outer and inner walls accommodated soldiers or supplies in peacetime. During a siege, the defenders filled this with earth to strengthen the rampart. Since the 9th century BCE, massive walls with towers and bastions had become common.

This innovative defence design was probably caused by siege techniques. Before the appearance of the Assyrians in the Levant, attackers had captured cities or strongholds through ladder assaults - with the defenders on their walls enjoying a tactical advantage. As long as a city or a fortress had enough supplies in store, the defenders could simply wait until the attackers ran out of money or patience.

However, the Assyrians changed siege warfare fundamentally through the introduction of new weapon systems and tactics. Straight walls provided the ideal target for the Assyrian tactics, whereas ramparts with advancing towers and battlements presented less vulnerable attack points and gave the defenders the opportunity to take the attackers down in a lethal crossfire.

THE ASSYRIAN ATTACK ON THE LEVANT

Facing the Assyrian threat, 11 Levantine kingdoms formed a defensive alliance. In 853 BCE, Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser III faced the coalition in the famous Battle of Qarqar (today's Tell Qarqur) at the shore of the Orontes River in northwestern Syria - one of the biggest battles ever fought at the time. He led an army of 70,000 men to the battlefield, including 1,200 cavalrymen and 4,000 chariots.

The anti-Assyrian alliance had mustered a formidable force as well. Contemporary sources tell the story of a bloody fight with thousands of soldiers dead. Assyrian accounts present Shalmaneser as the victor, a contentious claim that probably resulted from Assyrian propaganda, because Shalmaneser was hesitating to move further south for years. It took him three more attempts to break the anti-Assyrian alliance and conquer the southern Levant in the 840s BCE. In the end, internal struggles between the Levantine allies brought the coalition down, giving the Assyrians a golden chance to fight the kingdoms one by one.

The following 150 years were characterised by conflicts between the kingdoms of the Levant and rebellions against the Assyrian hegemon. Israel and Judah survived as Assyrian vassals for the time being. Eventually, Israel pushed its luck too far by trying to play the regional great powers off against each other, namely Assyria and Egypt. The Assyrians didn't hesitate and crushed Israel in 722-21 BCE. To neutralise a threat in a strategically important buffer area between Mesopotamia and Egypt, the Assyrians deported tens of thousands of inhabitants and resettled people from other parts of the empire - the kingdom of Israel was no more.

The southern Hebrew kingdom, Judah, ruled by King Hezekiah (725-698 BCE), did not follow Israel into the rebellion and was now rewarded by years of political stability, prosperity and even territorial expansion. When the Assyrian king Sargon II died in 705 BCE, Hezekiah made a crucial mistake when he joined in with the series of rebellions breaking out in every corner of the Assyrian Empire. As soon as the new Assyrian king, Sennacherib (705-681 BCE), consolidated his position at home, he set his army in motion towards the Levant.

SIEGES OF LACHISH AND JERUSALEM

Sennacherib's campaign against the southern Levant in 701 BCE is one of the most well-

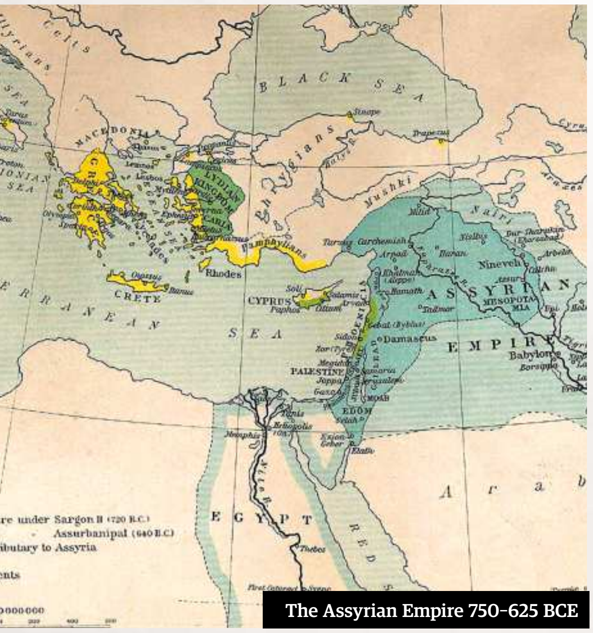
THE SOURCES

The Old Testament (in particular the books Kings and Chronicles) tells the history of the Hebrew kingdoms of Israel and Judah from the 10th to the 7th century BCE. Although the story is a little biased - especially when it comes to the enemies of the Hebrews - it still remains a valuable source from the period.

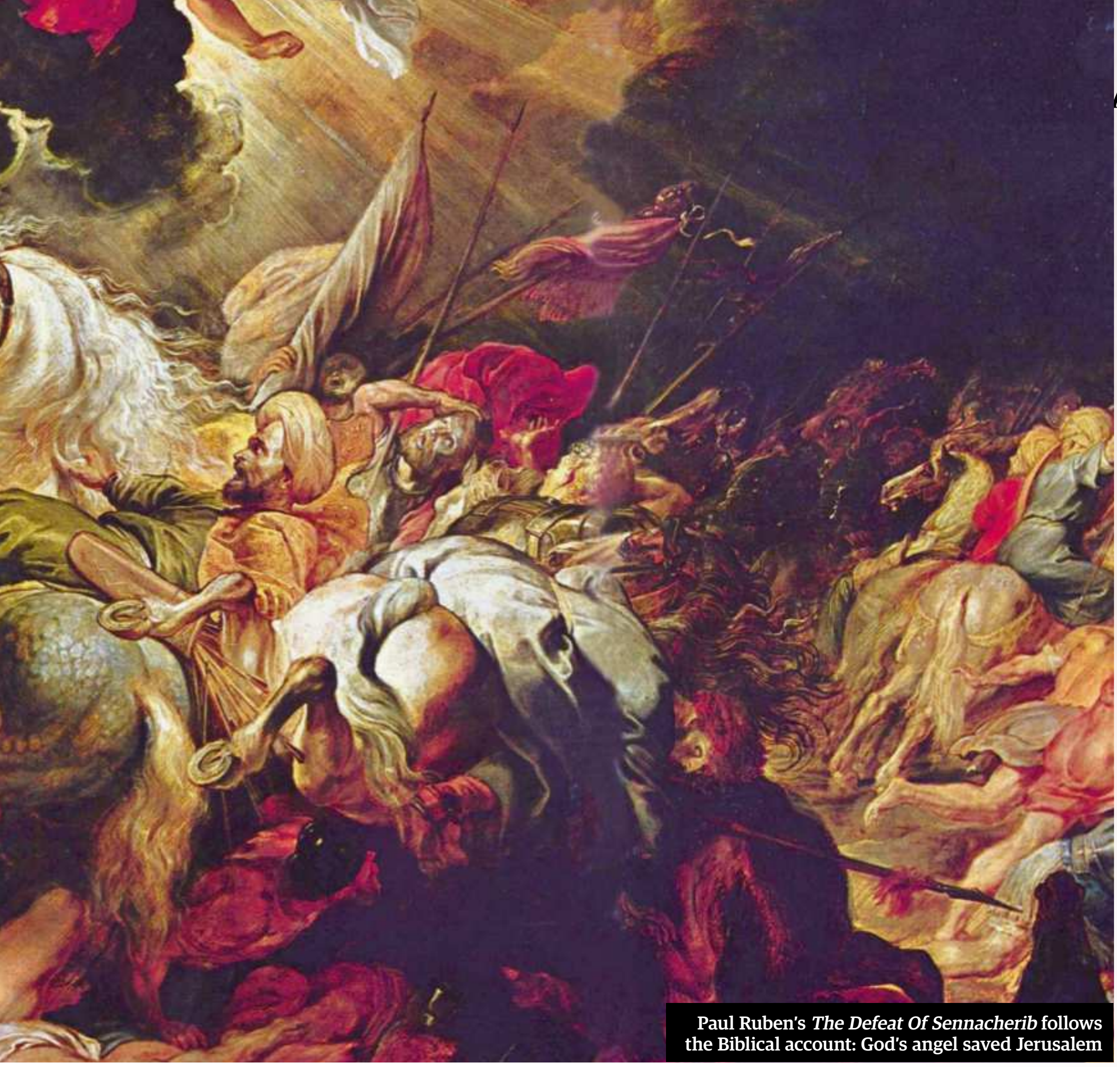
Assyrian sources present us with the other side of the story. There are numerous written records that keep much closer to the events than the Bible. The annals of the kings and the eponyms (lists of important Assyrian officials) provide specific information about rulers and events. However, these sources were mainly produced as Assyrian propaganda and are therefore far from unbiased in their account.

Finally, archaeology adds important insights as well, as the traces of war and destruction are still visible today. The excavation of ancient cities like Megiddo, Hazor and Lachish in modern-day Israel bring back to life the devastation of Assyrian siege warfare. Findings of weapons, fortifications and the traces of siege engines help us to understand the events that took place 2,700 years ago. A huge relief depicting the Assyrian capture of the Judean city of Lachish in 701 BCE, which was unearthed in the Assyrian capital Nineveh, presents a unique opportunity to study not only warfare techniques but the appearance of soldiers and weapons as well.

Right: The Jerusalem Prism (shown in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem) contains Sennacherib's annals written in Akkadian



The Assyrian Empire 750-625 BCE



Paul Ruben's *The Defeat Of Sennacherib* follows the Biblical account: God's angel saved Jerusalem

documented military events of the Iron Age. Not only can historians rely on the annals of the Assyrian king and the biblical account - there are also plenty of archaeological remains.

Hezekiah prepared for the consequences of his decisions. He knew that Sennacherib would come for him and that his forces would not stand a chance in an open battle. He had his cities and strongholds readied for protracted sieges - above all the capital of his kingdom, Jerusalem. He extended the city wall and secured the water supply by constructing a 550-metre-long tunnel that diverted the water from Jerusalem's only spring, the Gihon, to a huge pool inside the city walls.

Sennacherib pushed forwards along the Mediterranean coast and swept away any resistance. An increasing number of cities surrendered before it came to a fight. Eventually, Sennacherib turned towards Judah and lay siege to the heavily fortified city of Lachish. Archaeological excavations revealed a 50- to 60-metre-long ramp, the Assyrians having piled up 19,000 tons of soil to create this pathway for their siege engines. Mass graves, hundreds of arrowheads and sling stones and traces of a horrific fire in the city bear witness to the bloody battle and destruction. The Battle of Lachish has also been depicted in a relief in the palace of Sennacherib in Nineveh.

Despite intensive preparations, Lachish and 45 other Judean strongholds perished. Finally, Sennacherib moved towards Judah's capital, Jerusalem, where he encircled the city according to Assyrian standard siege practice. Apparently, it was just a matter of time until the Assyrian ruler would secure another victory. Sennacherib's annals claim, "I locked him [Hezekiah] up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage."

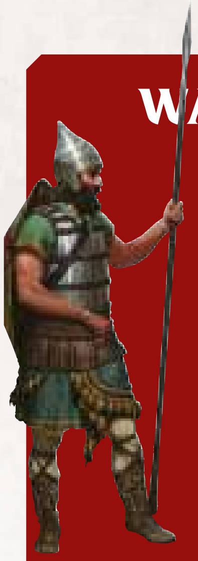
Suddenly, the Assyrians left. Hezekiah even stayed on his throne. According to the Bible, God sent an angel into the camp of the Assyrians, which killed most of their army in one night - an indication of a deadly plague in the camp. Assyrian sources tell a different story: Hezekiah paid a high tribute in order to save his city. Besides gold, silver and Judah's elite fighting troops, Sennacherib claimed he, "took out 200,100 people, (...) horses, mules, donkeys, and camels, cattle and sheep, without number, and counted them as spoil."

Another theory suggests that Sennacherib had to leave immediately because a rebellion had broken out in Babylonia. His withdrawal saved Jerusalem - at least for the time being. Judah, however, had suffered dearly from the political plunder of Hezekiah: the deportation of a considerable part of its population affected the economy and it took years for it to recover.

The Assyrian Empire reached its peak in the following decades with the conquest of Thebes, the capital of Egypt. However, internal power struggles led to its demise. At the end of the 7th century, Assyria fell to the rising power of Babylonia. Desperate, it formed an alliance with Egypt.

During the Battle of Carchemish (in modern-day Syria) in 605 BCE, the Babylonian crown prince Nebuchadnezzar dealt the Assyrian Empire its final blow. In the following years, the Babylonian ruler conquered the entire Levant and established Babylon as the new superpower in the Middle East.

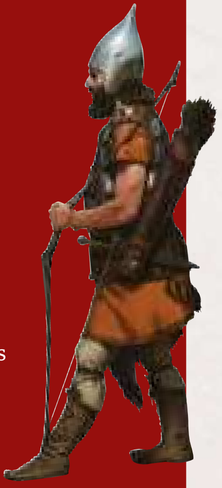
WARRIORS



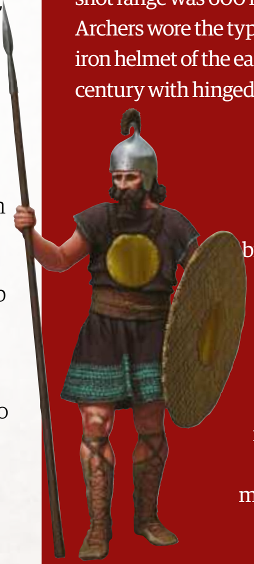
INFANTRYMEN

A heavy infantryman would be armed with a two-edged lance to be wielded as a close-range thrusting weapon, as well as with a straight sword. His armour consisted of the characteristic Assyrian conical iron helmets, knee-long fringed coats and lamellar body armour. The shield was a cone of leather edged and embossed with bronze.

ARCHERS



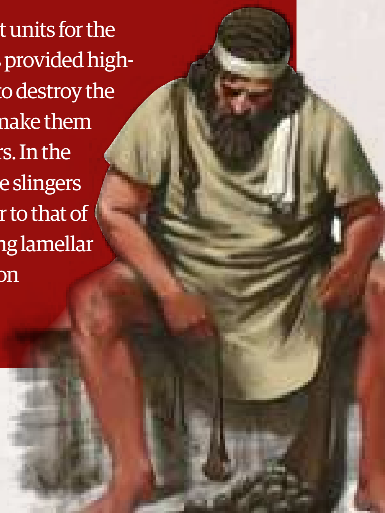
Although sometimes simple bows were used, the composite bow was the Assyrians' main offensive weapon. Archers usually operated in pairs, with the second man being a shield bearer. The shields, made of reeds, were bigger than a man and curved on the top to protect the archers. The composite bow's shot range was 600 metres. Archers wore the typical conical iron helmet of the early 7th century with hinged earpieces.



AUXILIARIES

A particular feature of the Hittite troops was the round bronze plate warn as protection for the chest and helmets with crests. Apart from that, the auxiliary infantry troops were largely unarmoured. Auxiliary troops were usually responsible for the occupation of the provinces and could be mustered to support the regular Assyrian forces during the course of campaigns.

SLINGERS



Deployed as support units for the archers, the slingers provided high-angle fire and tried to destroy the enemy's shields to make them vulnerable to archers. In the 8th century BCE, the slingers wore armour similar to that of the archers, including lamellar body armour and iron conical helmets.

SPARTA: WARRIOR STATE

PAIN, CRUELTY AND BRUTAL TRAINING – LIFE FOR A BOY IN SPARTA WAS HARSH. EXPLORE THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR THROUGH THE EYES OF A SOLDIER PUSHED TO HIS LIMITS

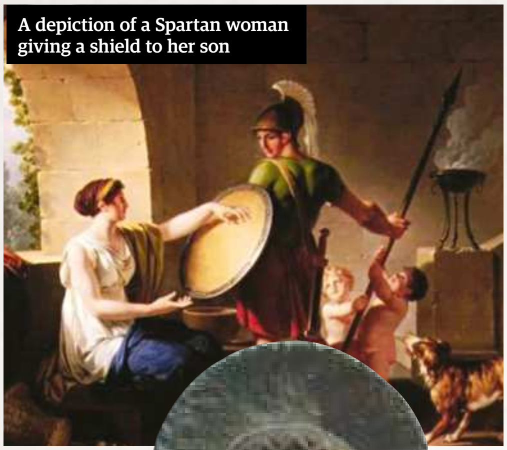
Come back with your shield, or on it.” These were words that would resonate for any warrior, but for Aristodemus, even the memory of his mother's voice reciting the Spartan rhetoric made him feel deeply ashamed. His hand gripped the shaft of his spear, knuckles whiter and palm slicker than those of his comrades, his focus narrowed to a pinpoint even through the visor of his full helm. This battle was important: retribution against the would-be invading army of Xerxes, for the sacrifice that the warrior king Leonidas and his chosen 300 Spartans made at Thermopylae the year before.

The story of his birth was a minor legend even in his own time: when the ephors - Sparta's elder statesmen - took him from his mother to Mount Taygetos, Aristodemus was small and jaundiced. He was placed in the gorge for starvation, the weather or wild animals to take him - but the Spartan babe had no intention of going the same way as so many other newborns. In that cursed place he clung to ephor Sphodrias' fingers so tightly that he was unable to shake this tiny child from his grasp. Beaten, and seeing the Spartan pup in a new light, Sphodrias had taken Aristodemus back to his mother to be reared at home.

In the light of what Aristodemus was about to do, Sphodrias might well have bashed him against the ground until his hand was released. But the elders weren't around to judge him now, as Aristodemus broke rank and surged forward. One of his fellow hoplites tried to grab him but there was little purchase on his polished bronze cuirass. Besides, Aristodemus was fleet of foot even among his peers. He sprinted toward the advancing Persians, over 30 years of punitive daily training and cruel warrior trials pulsing through his mind.

He must have been three years old when he was left alone for hours in the pitch black of his home, bawling for his mother to light a lamp or to keep him company, to no avail. Then his mother would come home and temper his body by emptying an amphora full of stale wine over his head until his eyes stung. He'd been half-starved his whole life but it was around this time that the gnawing in his stomach was unbearable. And then, like any other Spartan boy, he was taken away at the age of seven to become a Spartan paidion and to live in the barracks, lest his easy living with his mother soften him.

The next 12 years of his life were spent in the increasingly tough regime of the agoge. Mandatory to all male Spartan citizens except the firstborn sons of the royal houses, it was here Aristodemus was taught stealth, combat and communication among other disciplines. Above all, loyalty to Sparta was drummed into him to ensure when the time came he wouldn't hesitate to put the state first.



A depiction of a Spartan woman giving a shield to her son

Life in the agoge at least made sense of his early youth, even if the Spartan warrior fraternity was brutal. The entire agelai (the pack, or class) of Spartan youths Aristodemus was enrolled into were once stripped to the waist and flayed simultaneously - just to try their endurance. Their families watched, encouraging their sons to act like the Spartan warriors they aspired to be, to silently take the pain. After four strokes, Dion (who was particularly skilled at the fight-dance pyrriche and had the hallmarks of a future leader) cried out in anguish. His parents hissed at him from the sidelines and he was disgraced. Meanwhile, Aristodemus was still standing silently after 23 excruciating lashes. As the last paidion standing he had proved his mettle and he was lifted onto the broad shoulders of his trainer while his mother beamed proudly at him. The thick scars that licked across his back were his trophies and a testament to his honour.

A reckless battle rage now took him as the faces in the Persian front line came into focus. Aristodemus could make out doubt, confusion and even a trace of fear in the half-helms of Xerxes' so-called 'Immortals'. The indomitable form of a Spartan phalanx could break the confidence of the average soldier, but not even the cream of the Persian elite would willingly go toe-to-toe with a Spartan hoplite consumed with wanton bloodlust and a thirst for revenge.

As he closed the final few dusty yards, the hard, bittersweet memories of his teenage years flooded unbidden into his mind. At the age of 13, Aristodemus made the transition from paidion to a meirakion, or youth, and his life became tougher at every level. He was stripped of individuality, his head was shaved and he often went unclothed: a Spartan had no need for the trappings of weaker nations; being a Spartan soldier was dignified enough. He slept among his peers in a crowded dormitory on a bed of hard reeds, endured chilly winters and blistering summers and often returned bleeding and beaten from his exhausting daily martial routine. He didn't complain or so much as whimper; he considered himself lucky that a bloody mouth and cracked ribs was the extent of his injuries. The dummy spears and swords they trained with might have been wooden but they were no mere toys. One of his fellow agelai, Procles, let his guard slip for just a fraction of a second, enough for his sparring partner to exploit the opening and deliver a blow to Procles' temple so furious that he died on the spot. There was no mourning - Procles was obviously not cut out to be a Spartan soldier.

WHY DID SPARTA CONCENTRATE ON WARRIORS?

Why did Sparta focus on warfare rather than art and literature like most other Greek states? There's one main reason why Sparta formed a militaristic state of institutionalised warriors while the rest of Greece embraced the arts: the helots. These were a population the Spartans enslaved in the 8th century BCE. Formerly known as the Messenians, their land was rich and fertile compared to that of the Spartans, so they took it from them and forced these new slaves to toil the fields for Sparta. The trouble was, these helots were many times more numerous than the Spartans, were toughened by hard labour and frequently rebelled against their masters. The Spartans needed to control them in the most effective way they knew: by creating a martial government that rooted out the weak and forced everyone left into serving the military, whatever that entailed. Sparta did live in constant feat of a helot revolt, however, and with good reason – at one point they outnumbered the Spartans by as much as ten to one.

“HE WAS PLACED IN THE GORGE FOR STARVATION, THE WEATHER OR WILD ANIMALS TO TAKE HIM”

MILESTONES OF A WARRIOR

Trial at birth
Age 0
Spartan boys were put to the test the moment they were born. They were taken from their mothers and brought to the Spartan elders, who decided whether the child would be brought up as a Spartan warrior or taken to a place known as the apothetae at Mount Taygetos and left to die.

Toddler training
Age 0-6
Early life for a Spartan boy set the stage for a harsh military-oriented future. By frequently being left alone in dark or unfamiliar places and being washed in wine Spartans believed that their children would grow up much stronger than if they were given a traditional upbringing.

To the barracks
Age 7
At around seven years of age they would begin the first of three stages of the Spartan agoge. They became a paidion (a boy) and started their military career in earnest as part of a pack of young trainees guided by a teacher who would be known as the paidionomos.

Martial arts
Age 10
Though Spartan boys were in training to fight, they were also taught the culture of Sparta and were encouraged to compete against each other in music and dancing, as well as more martial pursuits. At the very least, the Spartans recognised the value of rhythm in combat.

Bonding practice
Age 13
Once a Spartan boy finished his 12th year he became a meirakion (a youth) and his training became more rigorous. His exercise was ramped up and he fought barefoot and half-naked. It was around this age that he must bond with an older man – a 'lover' – from whom he could derive guidance.

SPARTAN SKILLS

Three dangerous disciplines all Spartan warriors learned

SPEAR

The spear, or 'dory' as it was known, was a Spartan soldier's primary weapon. It was around 2-2.7 metres long, held with one hand, while a shield was held in the other, had a leaf spear head at the business end and a spike on the butt. It took considerable training to use this weapon effectively, as the length and heavy wood the shaft was turned from made it unwieldy in the hands of anyone other than a highly skilled fighter.

Difficulty ●●●●●
Danger factor ●●●●●
Prestige ●●●●●
Usefulness ●●●●●

SWORD

The Spartan's xiphos was a close-range weapon of around 30-40 centimetres in length (shorter than the swords of other Greeks), razor-sharp and as quick as it was deadly in a Spartan warrior's hands. In the tight melee of the Spartan phalanx they were far more effective than the weapons of the enemy, penetrating shield walls and inflicting devastating wounds. Given the fervour the state instilled in its youth, it would not be surprising if some were killed or seriously injured while training with the dory, xiphos or the larger bladed weapon, the kopis.

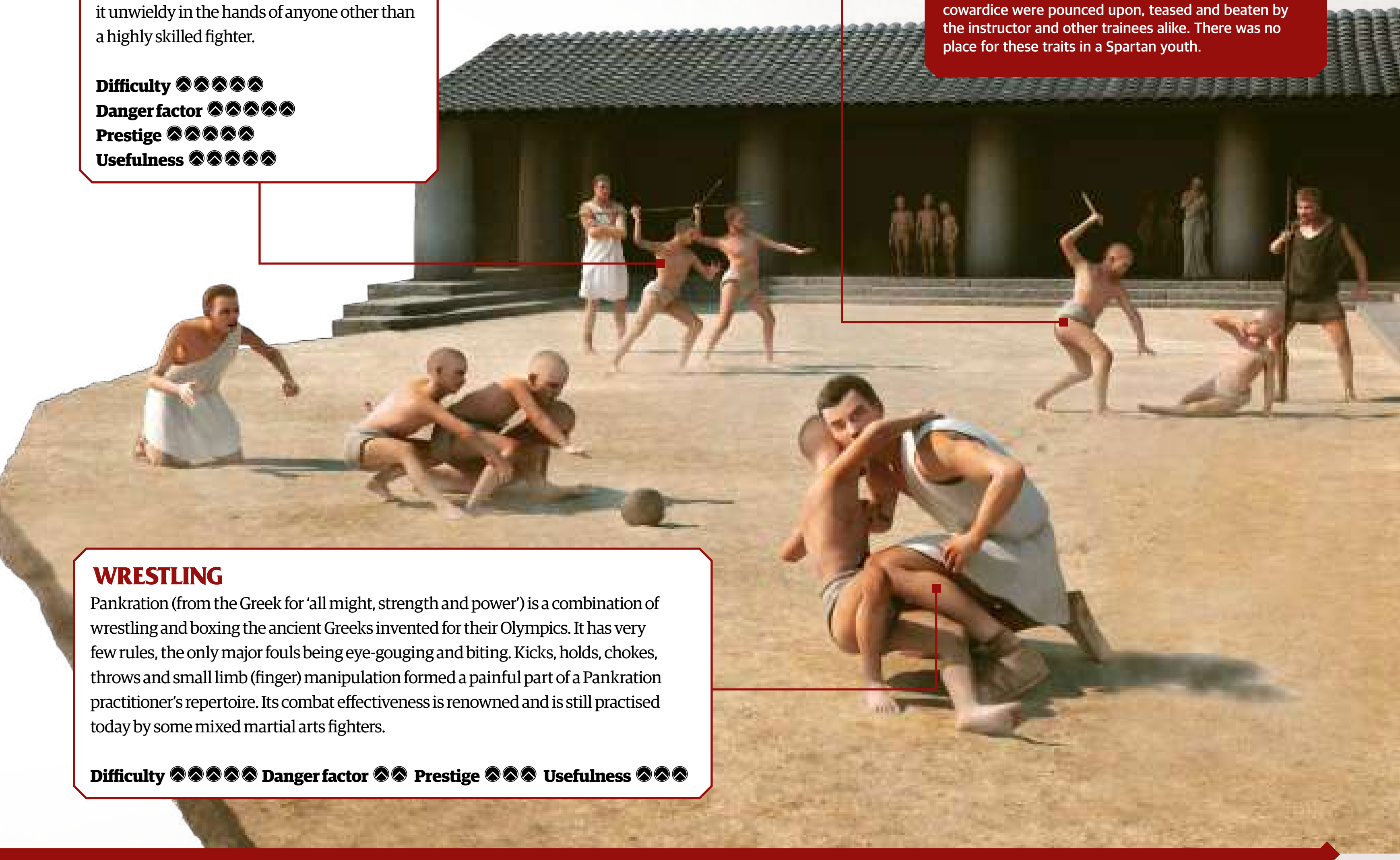
Difficulty ●●● **Danger factor** ●●●●
Prestige ●●●● **Usefulness** ●●●●●

TRAINING TECHNIQUES

Olympic gym meets military boot camp

As a part of Greece, Sparta incorporated many of their training techniques of their countrymen – some of which are still used by athletes today. The intensity of an exercise could be increased by hand weights or by making them run on sand. Gentle walking as a low-intensity cool-down was reckoned to be beneficial to their recovery and rest days were a vital a part of their conditioning. But there were remarkably cruel aspects to their training too.

Alongside the ritualistic flaying, known as the 'diamastigosis', there was the 'hazing': instructors regularly whipped up rivalries and instigated fights between trainees to harden their minds as well as their bodies. Those who were timid or showed signs of cowardice were pounced upon, teased and beaten by the instructor and other trainees alike. There was no place for these traits in a Spartan youth.



WRESTLING

Pankration (from the Greek for 'all might, strength and power') is a combination of wrestling and boxing the ancient Greeks invented for their Olympics. It has very few rules, the only major fouls being eye-gouging and biting. Kicks, holds, chokes, throws and small limb (finger) manipulation formed a painful part of a Pankration practitioner's repertoire. Its combat effectiveness is renowned and is still practised today by some mixed martial arts fighters.

Difficulty ●●●●● **Danger factor** ●● **Prestige** ●●● **Usefulness** ●●●

Teenage trials
Age 13-18
During the five years leading up to adulthood, Spartan boys were fed a meagre diet in the belief it would make them tall and strong and prepare them for future military campaigns with little in the way of rations. They could steal food if they wanted more but were severely punished if caught.

Passing on knowledge
Age 18
When a Spartan boy became an eiren (adult) he would spend his first year helping to train other youths at the barracks before moving to a mess with around 15 other, unmarried young Spartan soldiers. It was around this age he may have been sent on missions to kill unruly helots.

Secret service
Age 20-30
At some point after becoming a full member of the Spartan army but before their 30th birthday, a Spartan soldier was liable to two years in the krypteia, what was essentially the Spartan secret service. Part of their duties would have been to maintain control of helots in rural areas.

Got the vote
Age 30
Spartan boys were only really allowed the full privileges of adulthood within their society after their twenties. They were now finally allowed to marry or talk to other Spartans in the marketplace. Also, they could now vote and be voted in to hold a post in office.

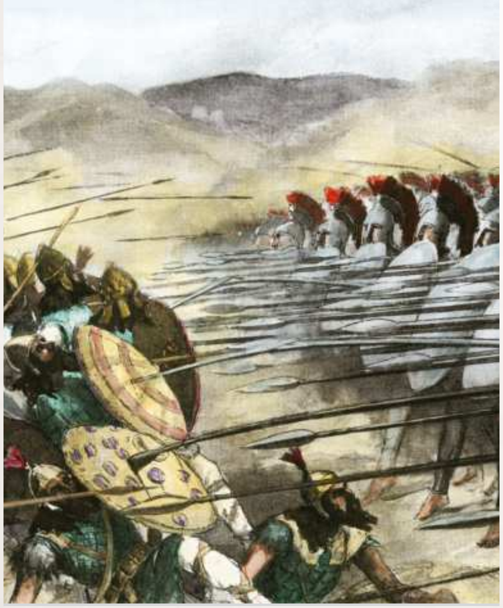
Retirement of a sort
Age 60
If a Spartan became a weak link for any reason, they could be retired from their current post on the front lines and given more menial duties. Older Spartan soldiers up to the age of around 60 were often sent to the rear for tasks such as guarding the baggage train on long campaigns.

THREE GREAT VICTORIES

PLATAEA 479 BCE
Who did they fight? Persia (Mardonius)
Having retreated back into Persia, Xerxes left it to his general Mardonius to tackle the Greek city-state alliance. An 11-day stalemate culminated in a withdrawal by the Greeks to resupply. This was taken as a full retreat by Mardonius and proved a fatal error. Spotting the enthusiastic – and reckless – Persian advance, the Spartans and other Greek armies halted their withdrawal and trapped a significant portion of the Persian infantry, routing them. The tide of the battle turned and the Persian invasion was repelled.

THERMOPYLAE 480 BCE
Who did they fight? Persia (Xerxes I)
Of course, the defeat of the Spartans at Thermopylae at the hands of the Persians is well documented. Around 4,000 other Greek soldiers along with 300 Spartans held the narrow pass of the Hot Gates before their position was compromised by the Persians and Leonidas decided to turn away all but his own men and around 1,000 other soldiers. However, their sacrifice bought time for the rest of the Greek forces to retreat and for the Greek cities to prepare for the invasion. It bolstered the morale of the other Greek states and ultimately contributed to Xerxes' army's own retreat back into Persia.

THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR
431-404 BCE
Who did they fight? Athens
Spanning nearly 30 years and punctuated by a brief truce, the culmination of this protracted war resulted in one of Sparta's greatest victories. Ironically, Sparta received some support from its old enemy, the Persians, as well as from its allies Corinth and Thebes, to make the final push on the powerful Athenian navy. Athens was crushed, the former major power in Greece reduced to a slave state while Sparta became, for a time at least, the leading light of the Greek city-states.

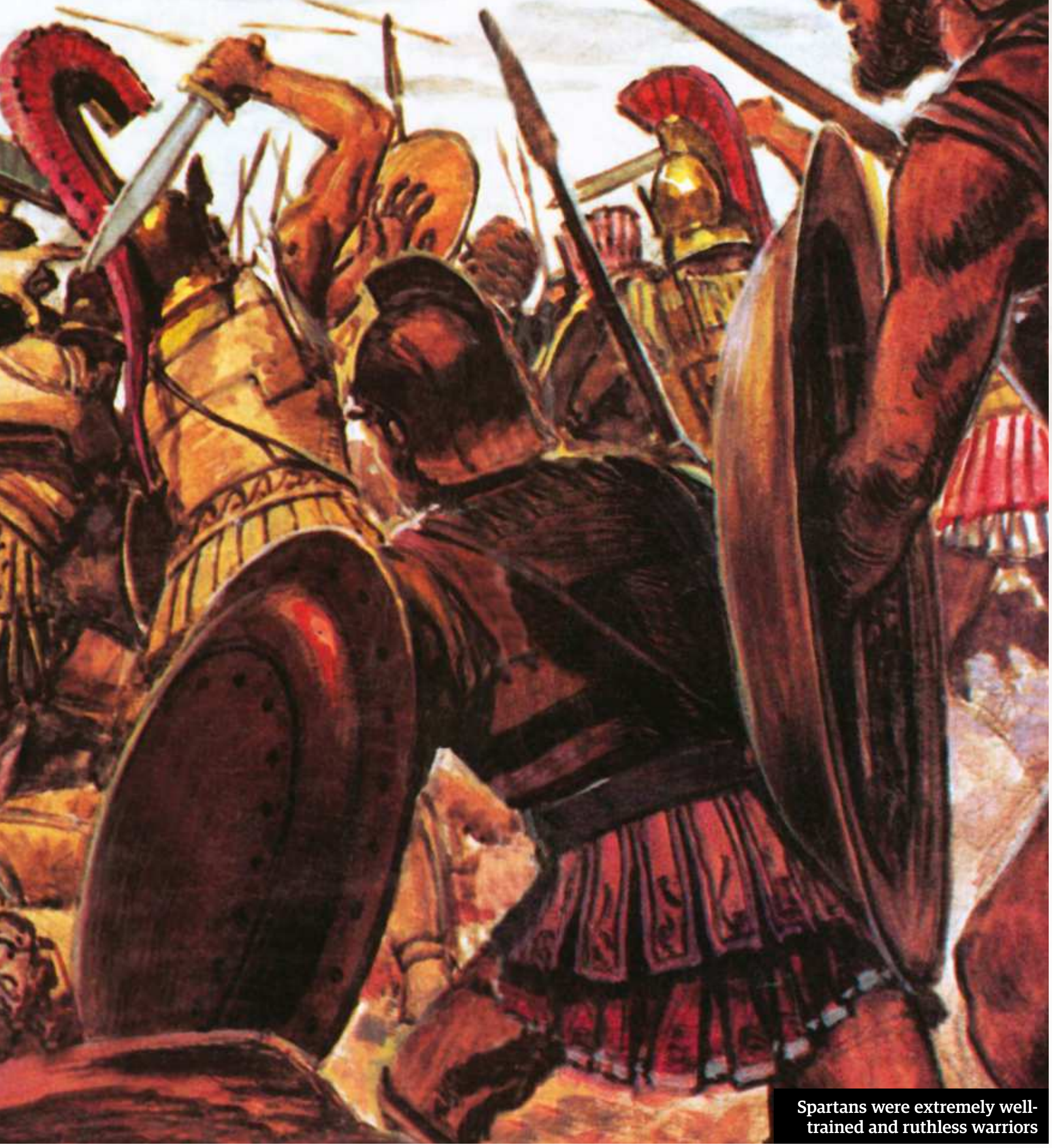


And now Aristodemus whispered a brief prayer to Apollo and Ares as he breached the Persian lines. The first Immortal he met didn't come close to living up to the title of his rank. Aristodemus used the momentum gained from his maniacal charge to plough his spear straight through his shield and pierce his throat. He didn't even attempt to retrieve his weapon from the Persian's body; the close range was ideally suited to his xiphos, a deceptively short sword that was deadly in the hands of a Spartan worth his salt. The next Persian to fall had somehow turned his flank to the maddened Spartan.

Buzzing with adrenaline and a catharsis of emotion, Aristodemus re-enacted the memory of his first kill. This was not a soldier from an invading army, but a helot slave gathering fruit in a vineyard. Spartans would encourage their youths to steal to supplement their poor diet to make them stealthy and cunning. If they were caught, they were usually beaten or whipped: the punishment was not for stealing but for being caught. By the time he was approaching manhood, this trial had taken a darker path. Signs of resistance were rippling through the helot slave community, so the ephors used this opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. To nip any chance of revolt in the bud and to hone the blooming talent for violence their youths had begun to exhibit, the ephors gave Aristodemus and a handful of others some meagre rations, a xiphos and the simple order to go into the Greek countryside, stalk and then kill a helot slave.

It took Aristodemus a day to choose his target and then wait until the big man was alone and burdened with grapes. The attack was lightning quick and came from unexpected quarters: Aristodemus ambushed the helot the way he'd been taught, his xiphos cleaving deep into the man's groin three times, severing the femoral artery and barely giving him a chance to acknowledge his attacker, who fled before the helot collapsed.

It seemed the Persians were almost as unused to the savagely efficient way the Spartans could wield



Spartans were extremely well-trained and ruthless warriors

FACT OR FICTION: IS THIS SPARTA?

300 DEFENDED THERMOPYLAE

King Leonidas and 300 of his chosen Spartan warriors single-handedly held off a Persian army of 100,000 at Thermopylae for three days, fighting to the last man before they succumbed.

VERDICT: FICTION

There were approximately 300 Spartans, but they were joined by thousands of other Greeks.

WOMEN TRAINED TOO

Spartan women also had a rigorous training routine and competed in athletics and gymnastics against boys. It was believed it was important for women to be physically fit to bear children.

VERDICT: FACT

For the time, women were held in very high regard in Sparta.

EPHORS WERE EVIL

The ephors (elders) of Sparta were a group of powerful and lecherous old men who often left Spartan newborns to die and demanded great sums of money for their wisdom, which the kings of Sparta valued greatly.

VERDICT: FICTION

They were simply elders who held power and respect in Sparta.

> “HE HANGED HIMSELF RATHER THAN FACE THE SHAME ARISTODEMUS EXPERIENCED ON HIS RETURN TO SPARTA”

their weapons as the helots. This Immortal looked dumbstruck as Aristodemus' blade flashed three times in the sunlight, before his legs gave way as a torrent of blood gushed down onto the battlefield.

The Persian front line was done absorbing Aristodemus' suicidal charge, and now it was time for the lines to close and repel this wayward Spartan. In the ensuing melee, a cut he inflicted on a Persian's head blinded one of his opponents.

An eye for an eye. Now that felt more like redemption. Thermopylae had never been far from Aristodemus' mind this past year, but the memory of his disgrace now came back to him with the same vigour of his battle fury. Having survived two days at the narrow pass of the Hot Gates, Aristodemus' eye became infected, effectively blinding him. To King Leonidas, he was now a weak link and a liability to the effectiveness of his war machine. He was denied the honour of fighting for what would be the final, fateful day and was sent back to Sparta along with another unfortunate soldier, Eurytus, who suffered the same affliction. Halfway home and realising what they would face upon returning alive and without the honour of victory, Eurytus decided to return to the Hot Gates and meet his fate. Aristodemus followed the orders of his king, however, and suffered a worse fate than his kinsmen at Thermopylae. He was snubbed, branded 'Aristodemus the coward', free Spartans could strike him in the street with impunity (though few dared put that law to the test), while no man could offer him shelter. It would have been the lowest ebb for any Spartan and yet, Aristodemus could still fight for Sparta - he could still redeem himself. Maybe it would be here, at the Battle of Plataea, with this final act of heroic abandon? Or if the black mark wasn't struck from his name, then his death would at least end the pain of his dishonour.

Aristodemus was one of only two survivors from the famous battle of Thermopylae. The other, who arrived too late at the final battle, hanged himself rather than face the shame Aristodemus experienced on his return to Sparta. This made Aristodemus the only veteran of Thermopylae to fight in the Battle of Plataea and goes some way to explaining why contemporary Greek historians picked out this particular soldier.

The story of Aristodemus is the embodiment of the highs and lows of the Spartan way. From an early age they were forged into superhuman fighting machines through a merciless training regime and the denial of some of the most basic of human needs - whether that was a square meal or the love and attention of their parents.

Boys were broken down and taught to live by their wits, to rely only on other Spartan soldiers, especially their 'lovers' - the dubious title given to their adult guardians. The ancient city-state of Sparta has earned a legendary status today because it was pathologically willing to trade a normal life for its own sons in order to create an army the ancient world would tremble before.

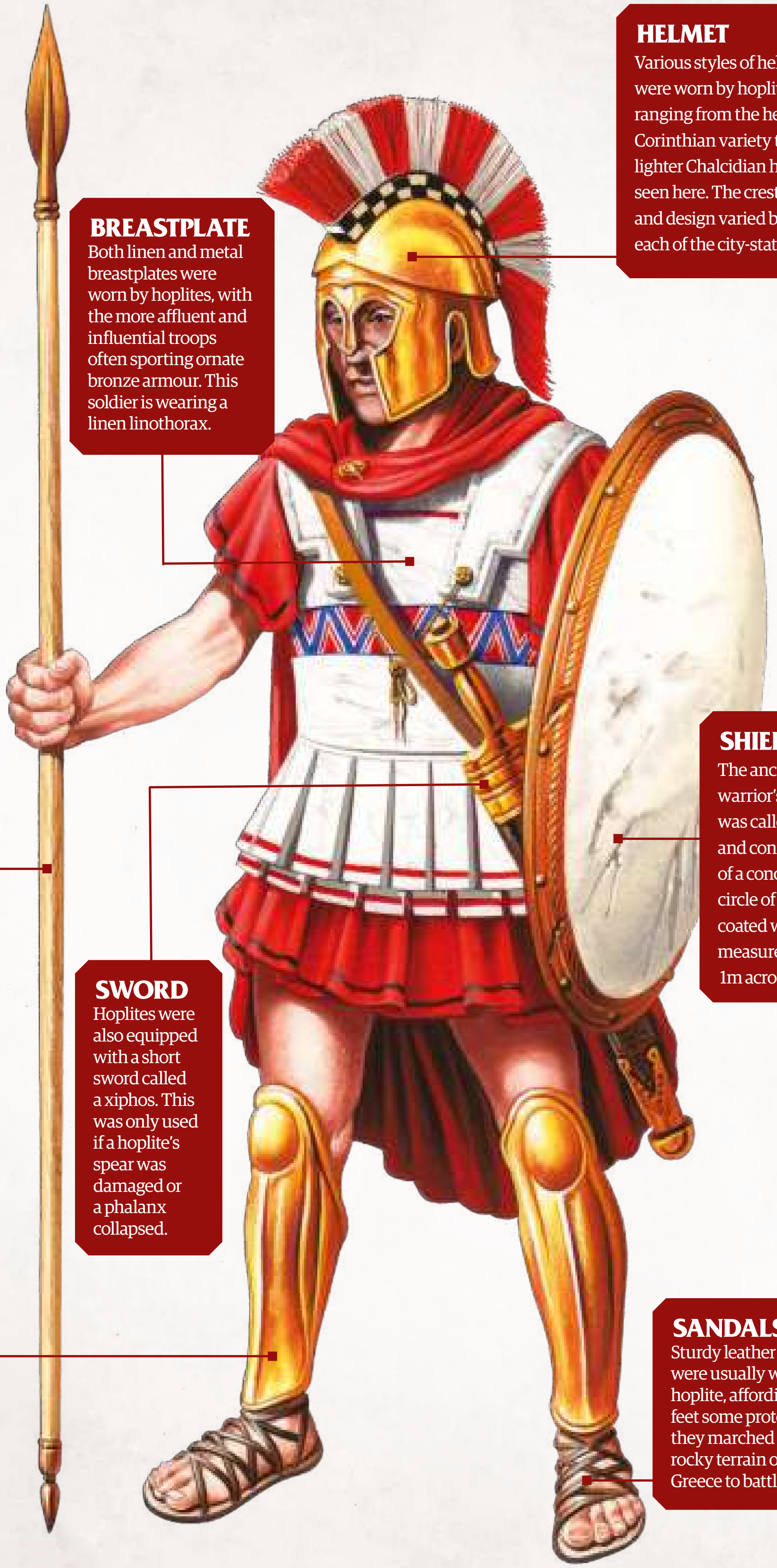
Aristodemus threw his life away at Plataea and his peers afforded him no special honour as a result. But Sparta recognised the fury and strength with which he had fought against the relentless Persian onslaught, a ferocity with which he cut down several Persians before falling himself. So in the eyes of his people, in the ethos of the brutal warrior state of Sparta, he had finally redeemed himself. Death was Aristodemus' salvation.

ANATOMY OF A
HOPLITE

The hoplites of ancient Greece were feared throughout the ancient world

Both in Homeric and post-Homeric Greece, hoplite warriors were considered some of the most deadly soldiers ever to take the field. Armed with an array of weapons including spears and swords and rigorously trained in the art of war over many years, hoplite armies often came to Greece's rescue.

Formed into a spiked phalanx, hoplites would fight together as one mobile unit, a formidable arrangement that helped them to score a number of unexpected victories, notably over the massive armies of the Persian Empire in 480 BCE.



HELMET
Various styles of helmet were worn by hoplites, ranging from the heavy-duty Corinthian variety to the lighter Chalcidian helmet seen here. The crest colour and design varied between each of the city-states.

BREASTPLATE
Both linen and metal breastplates were worn by hoplites, with the more affluent and influential troops often sporting ornate bronze armour. This soldier is wearing a linen linothorax.

SPEAR
The primary weapon of choice for any hoplite soldier was a formidable 2.5m-long spear. This stabbing weapon would have been tipped with a leaf-shaped blade at the top and a shorter, stouter blade at the opposite end.

SHIELD
The ancient Greek warrior's shield was called an aspis and consisted of a concave circle of bronze-coated wood that measured around 1m across.

SWORD
Hoplites were also equipped with a short sword called a xiphos. This was only used if a hoplite's spear was damaged or a phalanx collapsed.

GREAVE
These metal sheaves were commonly worn to protect the leg from the knee down to the ankle. They were typically hammered out of iron or bronze sheets.

SANDALS
Sturdy leather sandals were usually worn by a hoplite, affording their feet some protection as they marched across the rocky terrain of ancient Greece to battle.

LETHAL ANCIENT WEAPONS

A SELECTION OF SOME OF THE MOST BRUTAL INSTRUMENTS OF WAR EVER WIELDED ON ANCIENT BATTLEFIELDS

Written by Jack Griffiths

GLADIUS

Used by: Roman legionary

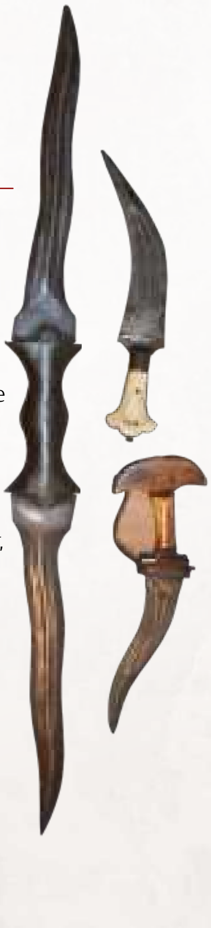
A short stabbing weapon that measured between a dagger and a sword in length, the gladius was unleashed once the legionaries had thrown their pilum. Wielded in unison with the scutum shield, it was deadly in close quarters.

Strengths:
The gladius could outmanoeuvre longer weapons in the heat of battle. Its double-edged blade meant it was ideal to cut and thrust into enemies.

Weakness:
It was best used as a stabbing rather than a slashing weapon, and the gladius' short reach could be a hindrance in battle.

HALADIE

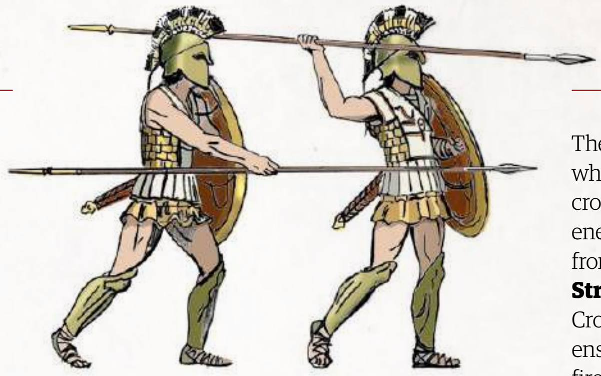
Used by: Ancient Indians



On the ancient battlefield, the haladie stands out as a particularly damaging weapon. Its curved double dagger could scythe through adversaries quickly and, more often than not, fatally.

Strengths:
Spikes protected the user's hand from blows and the blade could be swung rapidly, raking down multiple enemy soldiers in one move.

Weakness:
The haladie wasn't your standard weapon, so only specially trained warriors had the skill to brandish it effectively in a fight.



DORY

Used by: Greek hoplites

The dory was a long spear that was the weapon of choice for the ancient Greek hoplite. It was used in the tight and heavily armoured phalanx that moved forwards as an unstoppable juggernaut.

Strengths:
The 2.5-metre-long javelin's iron tip allowed the hoplite to impale onrushing enemy troops from a safe distance.

Weakness:
If the phalanx formation could be broken then shorter swords could cut down the long and sometimes cumbersome dory.

CROSSBOW

Used by: Ancient Chinese

The crossbow was devastating against infantry, who could not get close to the ranks of crossbowmen. The heavy bolt thundered into enemy troops and could be fired through armour from horseback.

Strengths:
Crossbowmen were arranged in a formation that ensured that they could provide a lethal spread of fire that meant groups of soldiers could be floored en masse.

Weakness:
The crossbow was slow to reload - a shortcoming that was cruelly exposed by English and Welsh longbowmen at Agincourt.

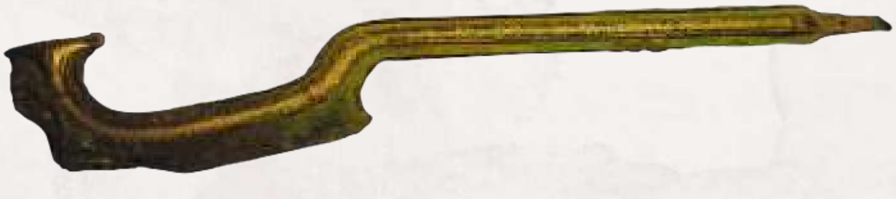
KHOPESH (KHEPESH)

Used by: Ancient Egyptians

A sickle-shaped upgrade on the battle axe, the khopesh's bronze blade meant it could slice enemies down in one blow. Its design would later influence future Greek and Hittite weapons.

Strengths:
Its meant it was adept at ripping shields away.

Weakness:
As it was bronze and not iron, the khopesh was unable to really trouble heavily armoured foes.



ROME ON THE MARCH

DISCOVER HOW THE ORGANISATION, WEAPONS AND TRAINING TECHNIQUES OF ROME'S LEGIONS CONQUERED THE WORLD

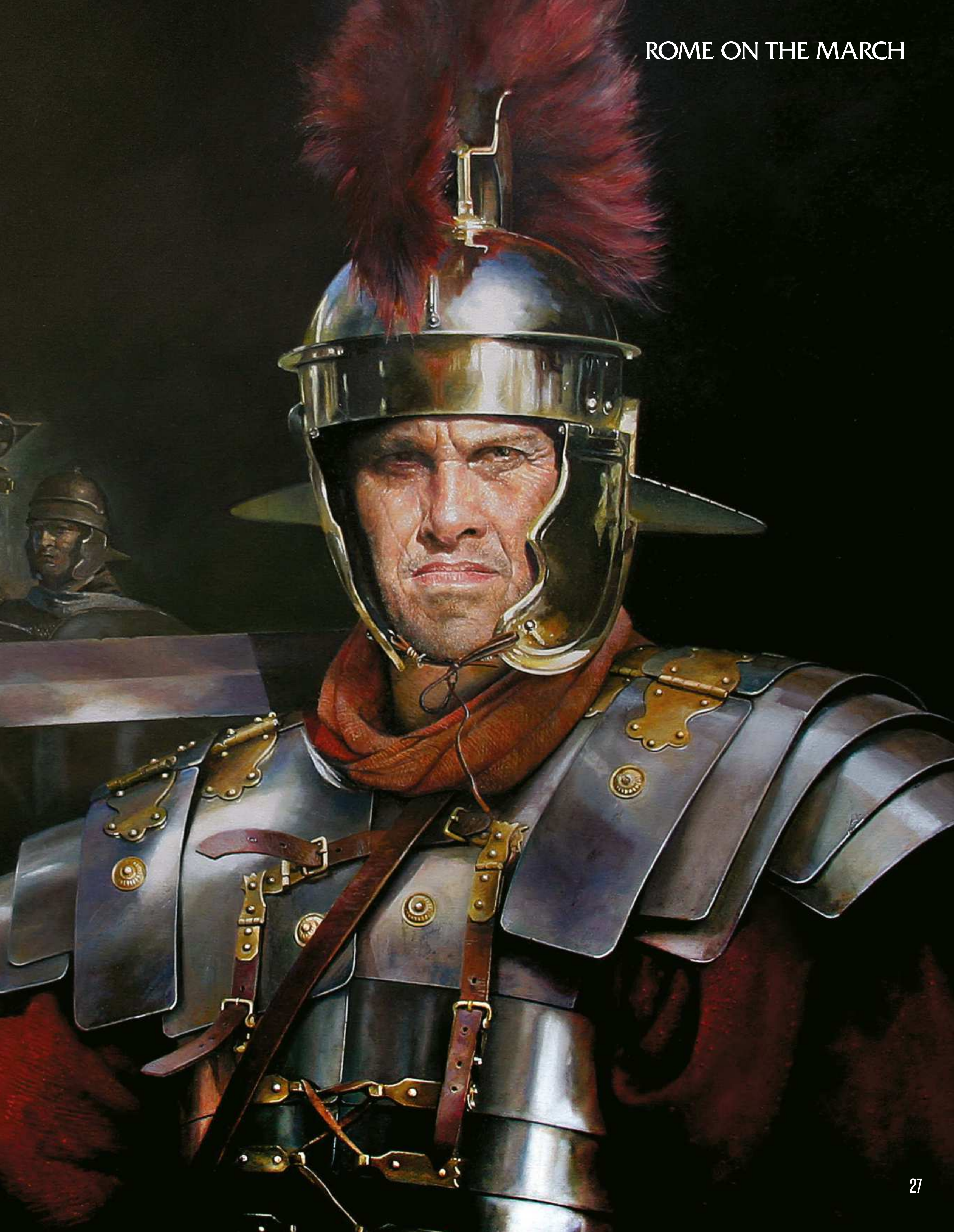
The Roman Empire dominated global battlefields for centuries, invading huge swathes of Europe and making significant inroads into both Africa and Asia Minor. Pax Romana (Roman peace) lasted from approximately 27 BCE to 180 CE, when the majority of Europe was under long-term Roman administration. During this time the barbarian hordes were quelled and the empire enjoyed relative tranquillity - Roman citizens had their formidable army to thank for this. Expertly trained and impeccably organised, Roman soldiers were among the best-armed soldiers the world had ever seen. The Roman war machine outwitted its barbarian opponents by using expert battle tactics and perfectly engineered weapons and armour.

Whether they were fighting on the sands of Egypt at the height of summer or the cold, icy wastes of northern Europe in winter, the legions had the tools and dedication for the job. The hierarchy and structure of the army was rigidly ordered, from the legate generals at the top all the way down to the munifex legionaries at the bottom.

The Romans also pioneered the first siege weapons and, unlike other civilisations of the age, soldiers were given full-time pay. In fact, a soldier was one of the finest careers in the empire. A legionary was paid 225 denarii for one year's service and even earned a pension and sometimes a portion of land after they retired, which was usually after 25 years.

On the battlefield soldiers worked together as one fighting entity, calling upon several deadly combat techniques to unleash on the enemy with devastating effect. However, perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the army were its transport and communication systems. Managing the logistics and administration of such a huge army in ancient times was a tricky business, so it was a phenomenal achievement that Roman generals kept their military machine so well oiled for such a long time.

> "WHETHER THEY WERE FIGHTING ON THE SANDS OF EGYPT AT THE HEIGHT OF SUMMER OR THE COLD, ICY WASTES OF NORTHERN EUROPE IN WINTER, THE LEGIONS HAD THE TOOLS AND DEDICATION FOR THE JOB"

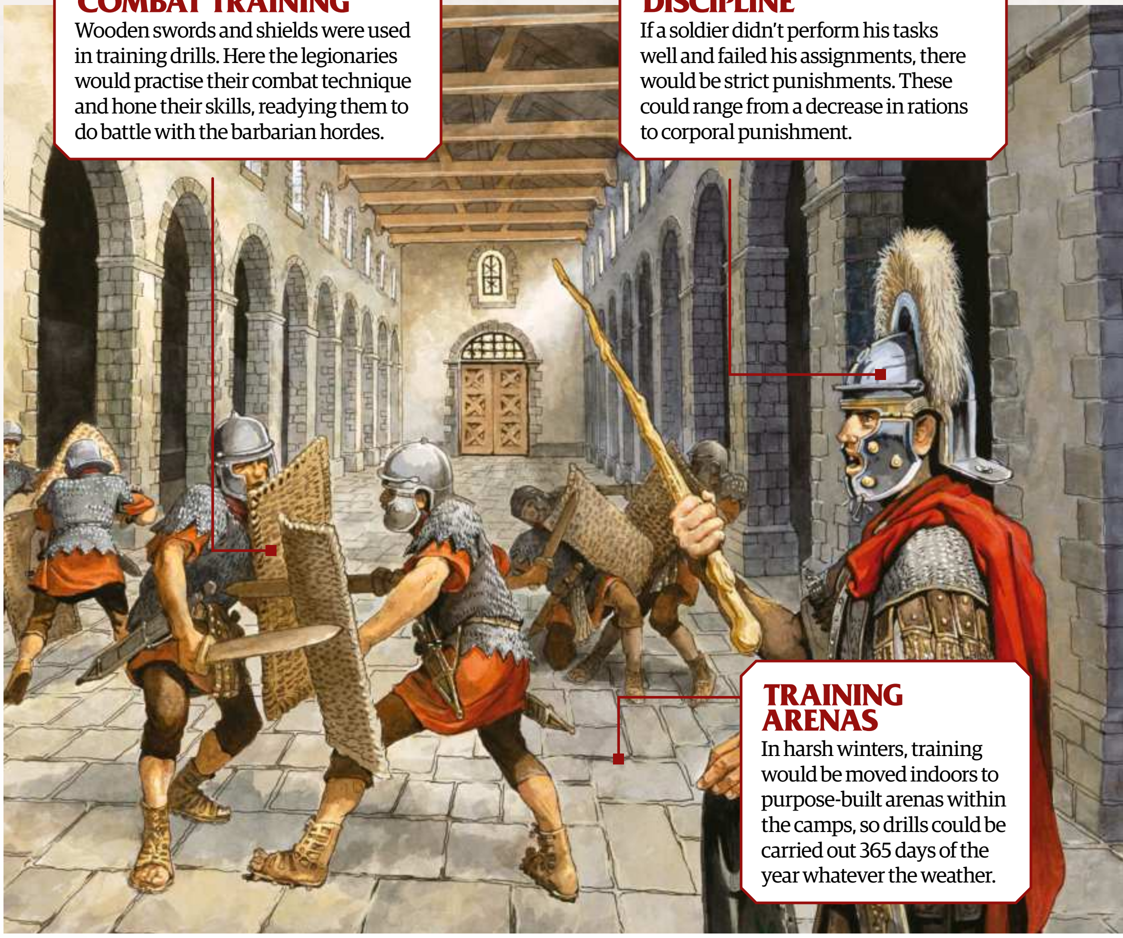


TRAINING

HOW THE ROMAN ARMY WAS PUT THROUGH ITS PACES AS IT PREPARED FOR BATTLE

To be selected, a recruit legionary would have to be at least 1.8 metres (5ft 10 inches) tall, be physically fit and have good eyesight. He would usually be allowed to begin his military training at the age of 18, although this could be decreased when the empire was at war. After swearing an oath of allegiance called a 'sacramentum' to the emperor, he would begin his training. A huge emphasis was placed on marching and legions would travel 20 Roman miles (29.6 kilometres) a day with a full load of equipment on their backs. There would also be repeated practice of formations and strategies to use in battles. Weapons training was a daily exercise as was the construction of ramparts and fortifications in case of a surprise barbarian ambush on a Roman camp.

> **"LEGIONS WOULD TRAVEL 20 MILES WITH A FULL LOAD ON THEIR BACKS"**



COMBAT TRAINING
Wooden swords and shields were used in training drills. Here the legionaries would practise their combat technique and hone their skills, readying them to do battle with the barbarian hordes.

DISCIPLINE
If a soldier didn't perform his tasks well and failed his assignments, there would be strict punishments. These could range from a decrease in rations to corporal punishment.

TRAINING ARENAS
In harsh winters, training would be moved indoors to purpose-built arenas within the camps, so drills could be carried out 365 days of the year whatever the weather.

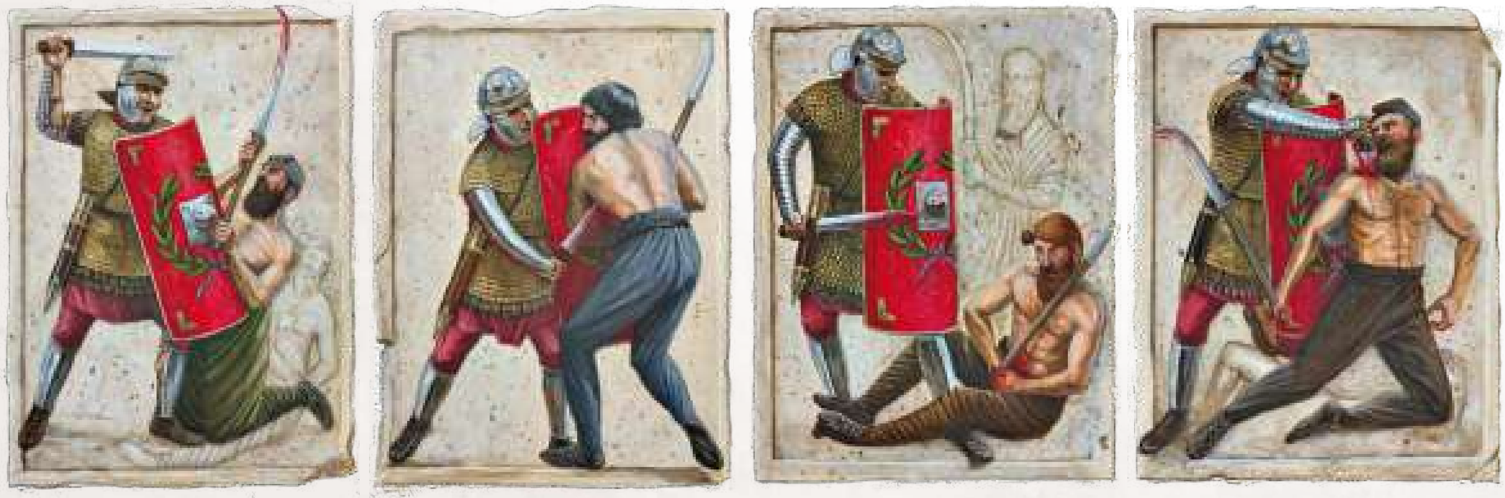
COMBAT TECHNIQUE

THE HAND-TO-HAND EXPERTISE OF A ROMAN LEGIONARY

Legionary fighting styles involved a mixture of sword and shield tactics. Barbarians from tribes such as the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Gauls and Vandals would often carry two-handed broadswords that could do major damage with a single blow.

To combat this threat, the Roman soldier would block the oncoming enemy with his shield and force him to reel backwards or even to the ground. From here, the legionary could use his sword to deliver quick cut-and-thrust strikes before the enemy could recover.

The gladius was much more nimble than a barbarian broadsword, and even if the legionary were disarmed he could use his shield as a blunt weapon. Alternatively he could reach for his secondary weapon: a short, concealed dagger known as a pugio.



AUXILIARY STRUCTURE

THE INFLUX OF MERCENARY FIGHTERS

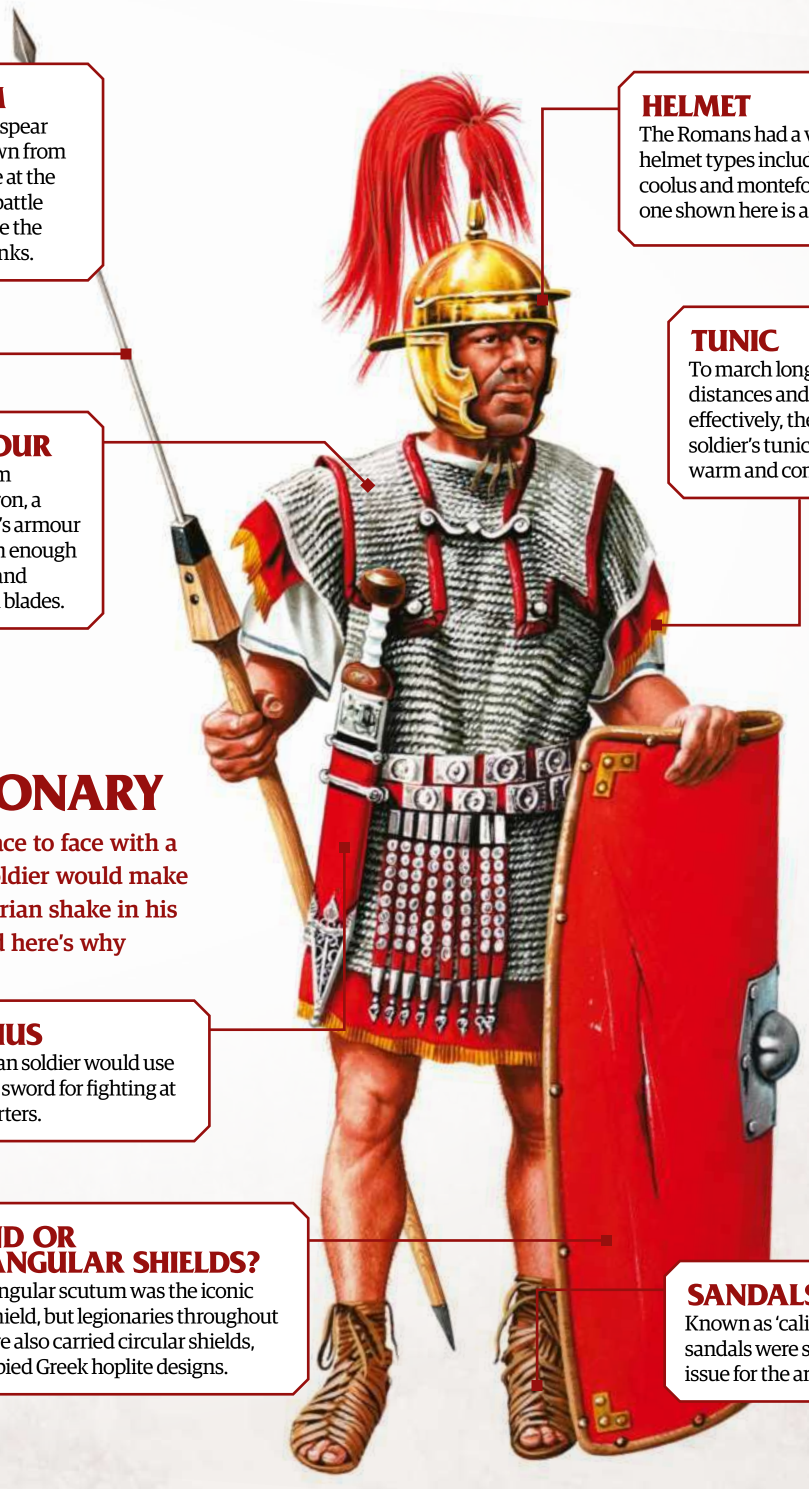
As the empire expanded, it required more manpower to defend its borders, so the army was forced to hire fighters from the occupied lands known as auxiliaries. These former barbarians were trained in the ways of the legion and rewarded with Roman citizenship if they served for 25 years.

The influx of soldiers from far-away lands changed the make-up of the army. An example would be the archers recruited from occupied lands in Asia Minor who used their bows to deadly effect. Auxiliaries also helped usher in a new era of chain mail and rounded shields rather than lorica segmentata and scutum.

The auxiliaries' role was to support the main legion in their own specialised cohort. They were paid a third of what a standard legionary received and were stationed away from their native lands to ensure they did not switch sides. This non-citizen corps aided the army by making its tactics more diverse with new cavalry and archer units.

THE LEGIONARY

Coming face to face with a Roman soldier would make any barbarian shake in his boots, and here's why



PILUM
This long spear was thrown from a distance at the start of a battle to unsettle the enemy ranks.

HELMET
The Romans had a variety of helmet types including the coolus and montefortino. The one shown here is a cassis.

TUNIC
To march long distances and still fight effectively, the Roman soldier's tunic was light, warm and comfortable.

ARMOUR
Made from strips of iron, a legionary's armour was tough enough to withstand barbarian blades.

GLADIUS
The Roman soldier would use this short sword for fighting at close quarters.

ROUND OR RECTANGULAR SHIELDS?
The rectangular scutum was the iconic Roman shield, but legionaries throughout the empire also carried circular shields, which copied Greek hoplite designs.

SANDALS
Known as 'caligae', these sandals were standard issue for the army.

HIERARCHY & STRUCTURE

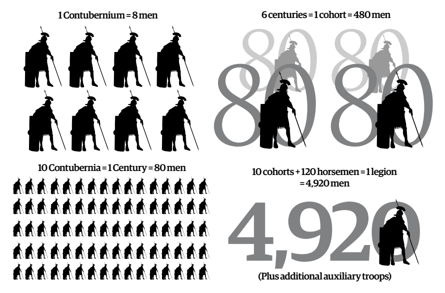
ORGANISATION WAS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO THE WORLD'S FIRST EVER PROFESSIONAL FIGHTING FORCE

The first division of the Roman army was the Manipular Legion, which was formed shortly after the city of Rome was founded in 753 BCE. Containing major influences from the phalanx tactics of the era, this initial army helped the Romans defeat rival settlements on the peninsula, such as the Etruscans and the Samnites as well as Greek and Macedonian forces that had come across the Adriatic and Ionian seas to the east. At this time, the soldiers formed more of a militia than an army per se, but this was all to change in 107 BCE with the Marian Reforms.

Instigated by general and statesman Gaius Marius, the reorganisation turned the army into a structured, professional force. There was now a standard pay for the new full-time legionary, and unlike before the army didn't disband after every campaign. Men were now hired from all across Italy and the number of troops swelled considerably. This was the birth of the Roman war machine.

With the new structure came a new type of hierarchy. At the very top were the generals, known as legates, who would command a legion of thousands of men. The units would then be divided up further into cohorts of several hundred men and finally 80-man divisions known as centuries that would be controlled by a centurion who received around 18 times more pay than the standard legionary.

The Roman Republic became an empire in 27 BCE when Augustus assumed complete control of the senate. Within the new empire fresh tactics and formations began to appear. Armoured cavalry units became popular and provided a whole new type of warfare. Shortly after cavalry, siege weapons such as the ballista were used in some of the first sieges.


1 Contubernium = 8 men
6 centuries = 1 cohort = 480 men
80 80 80 80
10 Contubernia = 1 Century = 80 men
10 cohorts + 120 horsemen = 1 legion = 4,920 men
4,920
(Plus additional auxiliary troops)

FORMATION & TACTICS

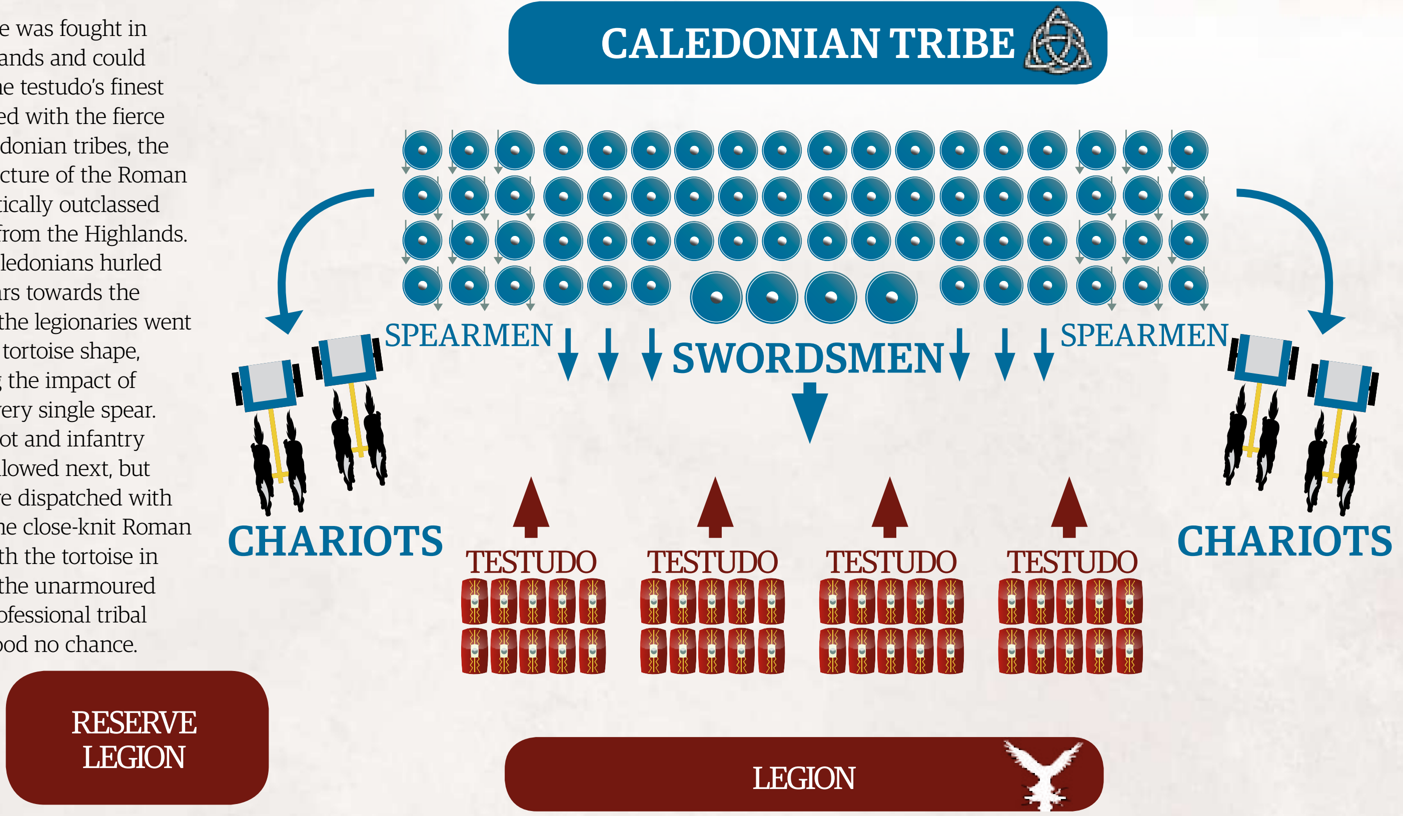
The Roman battle line was groundbreaking in its design and highly dynamic

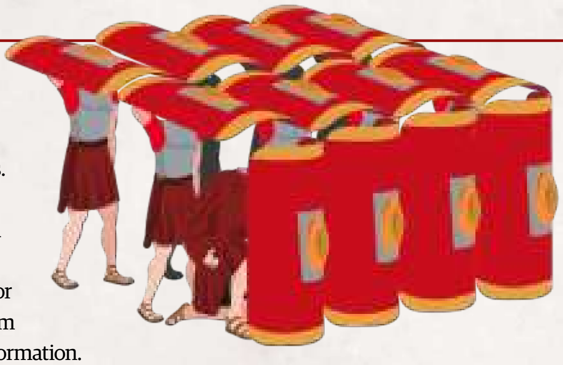
A professional and conscripted force, the Roman military introduced many new and innovative features to the art of warfare. Prior to the empire, the phalanx was the dominant tactic on ancient battlefields, but the Romans successfully made this once formidable formation obsolete in just a matter of decades.

BATTLE OF MONS GRAUPIUS

Rise of the testudo

This battle was fought in the Highlands and could well be the testudo's finest hour. Faced with the fierce local Caledonian tribes, the strict structure of the Roman ranks tactically outclassed the men from the Highlands. As the Caledonians hurled their spears towards the Romans, the legionaries went into their tortoise shape, nullifying the impact of almost every single spear. The chariot and infantry charge followed next, but these were dispatched with ease by the close-knit Roman ranks. With the tortoise in full flow, the unarmoured and unprofessional tribal militia stood no chance.





TESTUDO

The testudo (tortoise) could be useful in both open battlefields and in sieges. Using their near-body-length scutum shields, a division of legionaries could be almost impenetrable to projectiles as they edged closer to enemy forces or defences. The idea was developed from the Greek and Macedonian phalanx formation.

Strengths: Allowed advances into enemy territory while protected from projectiles.

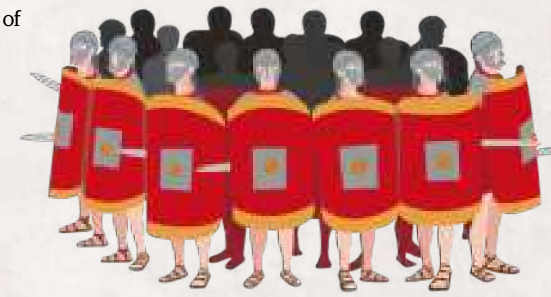
Weaknesses: Could not launch a quick attack very easily.

ORB

When a group was split from the main force and had been encircled by enemy troops, an orb formation would be deployed. This would only be used in desperation and as a sort of 'last stand', but it could hold off enemies in order to gain valuable time for a retreat or escape.

Strengths: Useful for legionaries who had been detached from the main body of the army.

Weaknesses: Left vulnerable, isolated and easily surrounded.

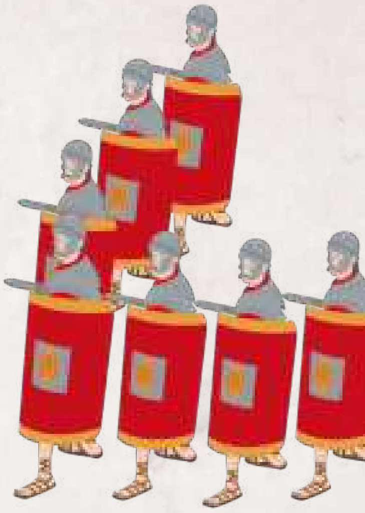


WEDGE

A more aggressive formation than the testudo and the orb, the wedge made an effective use of the Roman sword of choice, the gladius. Soldiers would form a triangle, with the tip facing the enemy, and then charge. The idea was to disrupt enemy lines and make use of the gladius in close-quarters combat.

Strengths: Took the enemy by surprise.

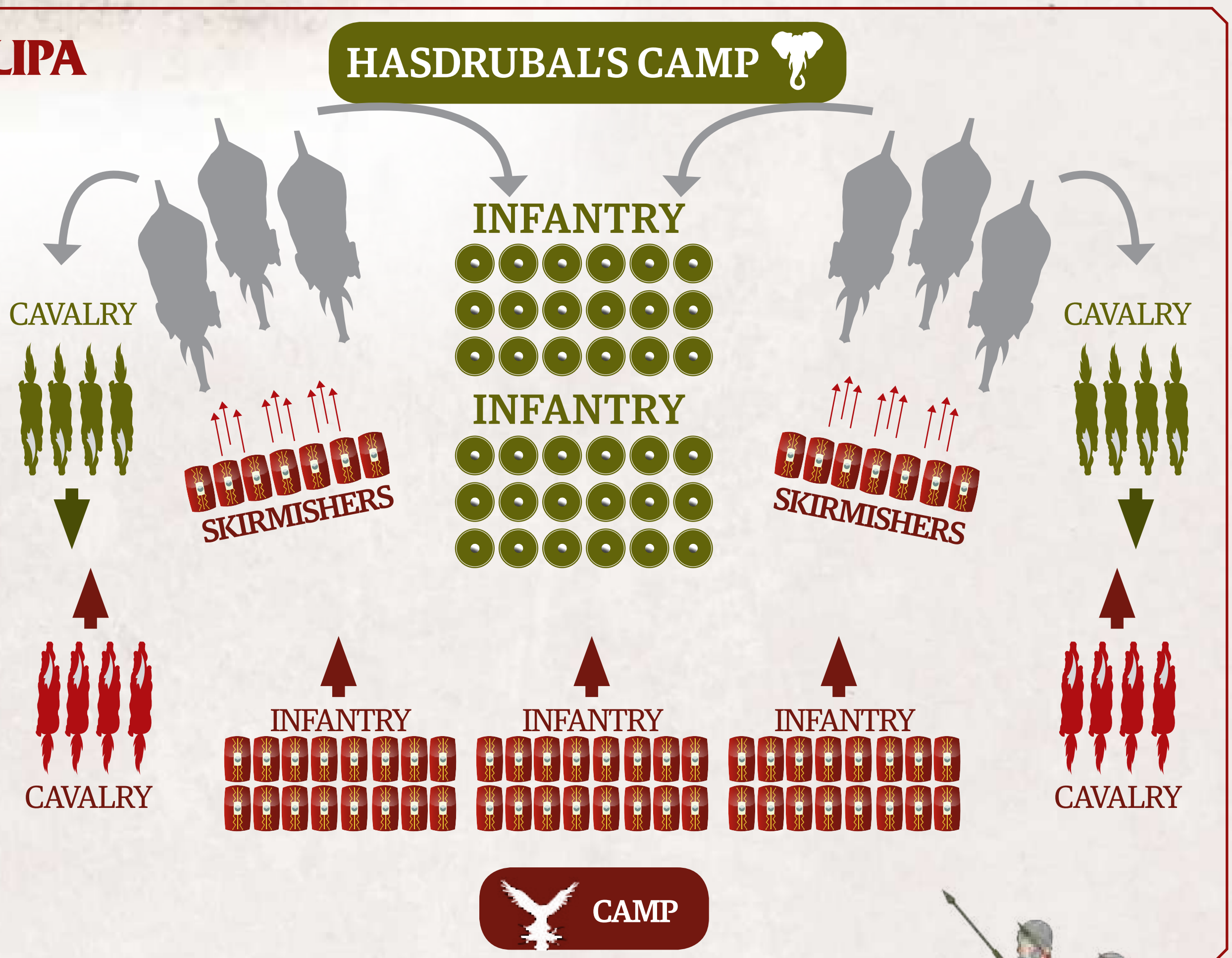
Weaknesses: Risky strategy if not undertaken properly.



BATTLE OF ILIPA

Countering war elephants

The skirmish tactic was utilised superbly by General Scipio in a battle that effectively ended the Carthaginian grip on Spain. Facing a full elephant division and 10,000 more men, Scipio used his skirmisher (velite) troops to hurl javelins at the enemy camp before dawn. The Carthaginians scrambled to their posts and were met with the Roman army on their doorstep. In disarray they sent out their elephant divisions, but the wide gaps in the Roman ranks meant the elephants did as much damage to their own forces as they did to the enemy before they were brought down by skirmisher javelins.

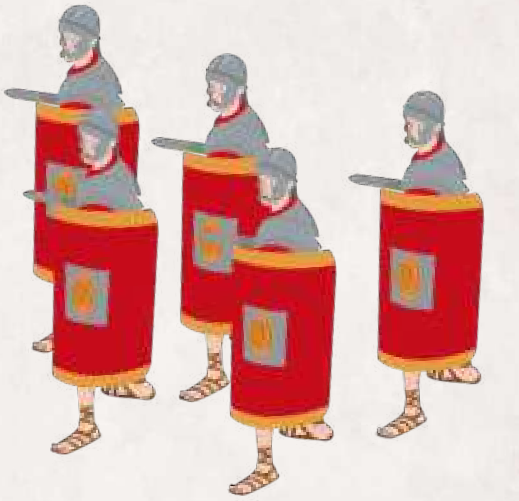


SKIRMISH

The Roman army wasn't always organised into tightly packed clusters. What gave it the advantage over the phalanx was its ability to spread out and double the size of its ranks. This would enable the commander to make use of velite skirmisher units, who hurled javelins at the enemy before the infantry rush.

Strengths: Very effective against phalanx tactics.

Weaknesses: Ranks vulnerable to a counter-attack.

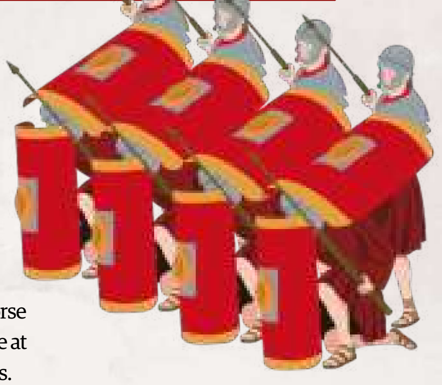


ANTI-CAVALRY

On the ancient battlefield, the horse was the tank of the age. The Roman Legion devised a way to repel a cavalry charge by forming a tight barrier of shields with their pilum spears pointing out from the front. When faced with this wall, a horse would often pull up and then be at the mercy of the Roman archers.

Strengths: Effective tactic against a greatly feared weapon.

Weaknesses: If the horse refused to pull up...



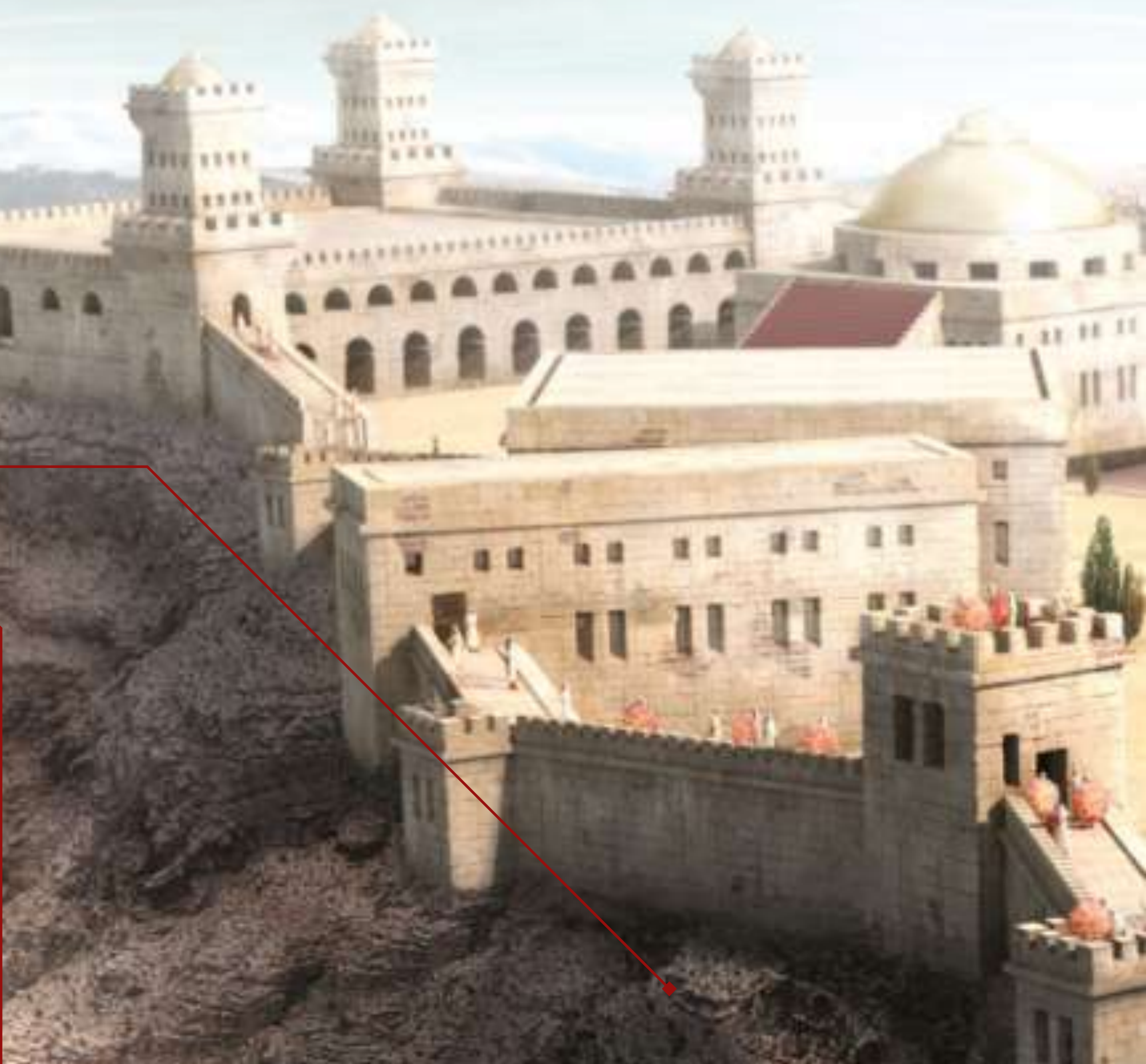
WAR ENGINES & SIEGES

If a settlement stood in the way of the Roman juggernaut, the true power of the empire's siege machines would be unleashed

As the Roman war machine swarmed across Europe, it would occasionally come into contact with heavily fortified enemy forts and towns. By destroying these centres, the Romans could deal a sizeable blow to the enemy forces and plunder the city of its resources and riches.

The siege would begin with the construction of a series of forts and guard towers around the city. This would prevent any enemy reinforcements reaching the city and cut off the water and food supply to the defenders. If the settlement still resisted, the full force of a siege would begin.

This reconstruction shows the extent of the walls that the Romans had to breach to gain access to Vercingetorix's camp



MINING

If faced by some particularly tough resistance, the legionaries would sometimes dig under the ramparts. Using the other siege engines as a distraction, hordes of soldiers could infiltrate inside the city, defeating the defenders from within.

FAMOUS SIEGES

Perhaps the most important Roman siege was that of Carthage. The centre of the Carthaginian Empire, it was sacked in 146 BCE, ending the third and final Punic War. Another famous event was the Siege of Alesia, which signalled the ending of Gaul's resistance after Julius Caesar surrounded Vercingetorix's camp and successfully defeated the leader of the Arveni Gauls. There were also sieges at sea, with Syracuse being the most prominent example.

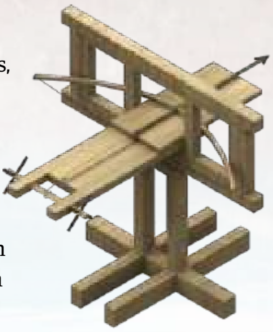
The desecrated city of Carthage lies in ruins. After a successful siege, the city would be razed to the ground to prevent future uprisings

THE BESIEGED CITY

Once victory was complete (this could take weeks, months or even years) the Romans would pillage the city for everything of worth. The only survivors would be women and children for use as slaves in the empire. During the Siege of Syracuse, the Romans were under strict instructions to capture the Greek genius Archimedes alive, whose siege weapons had wreaked havoc on the Roman advance. Unfortunately the message was not heeded and one of the greatest thinkers in the ancient world was killed by a Roman gladius.

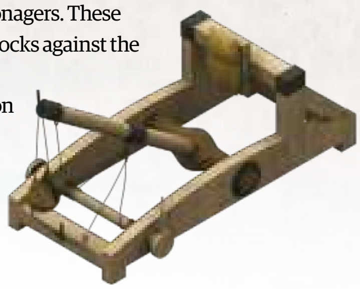
SCORPION

Torsion artillery was taught to the Romans by the Greeks, enabling the legions to create scorpions. Extremely accurate, this siege engine was one of the smaller Roman devices but this didn't stop its iron bolts from sowing panic and confusion within enemy ranks.



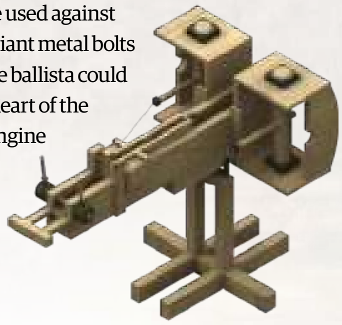
ONAGER

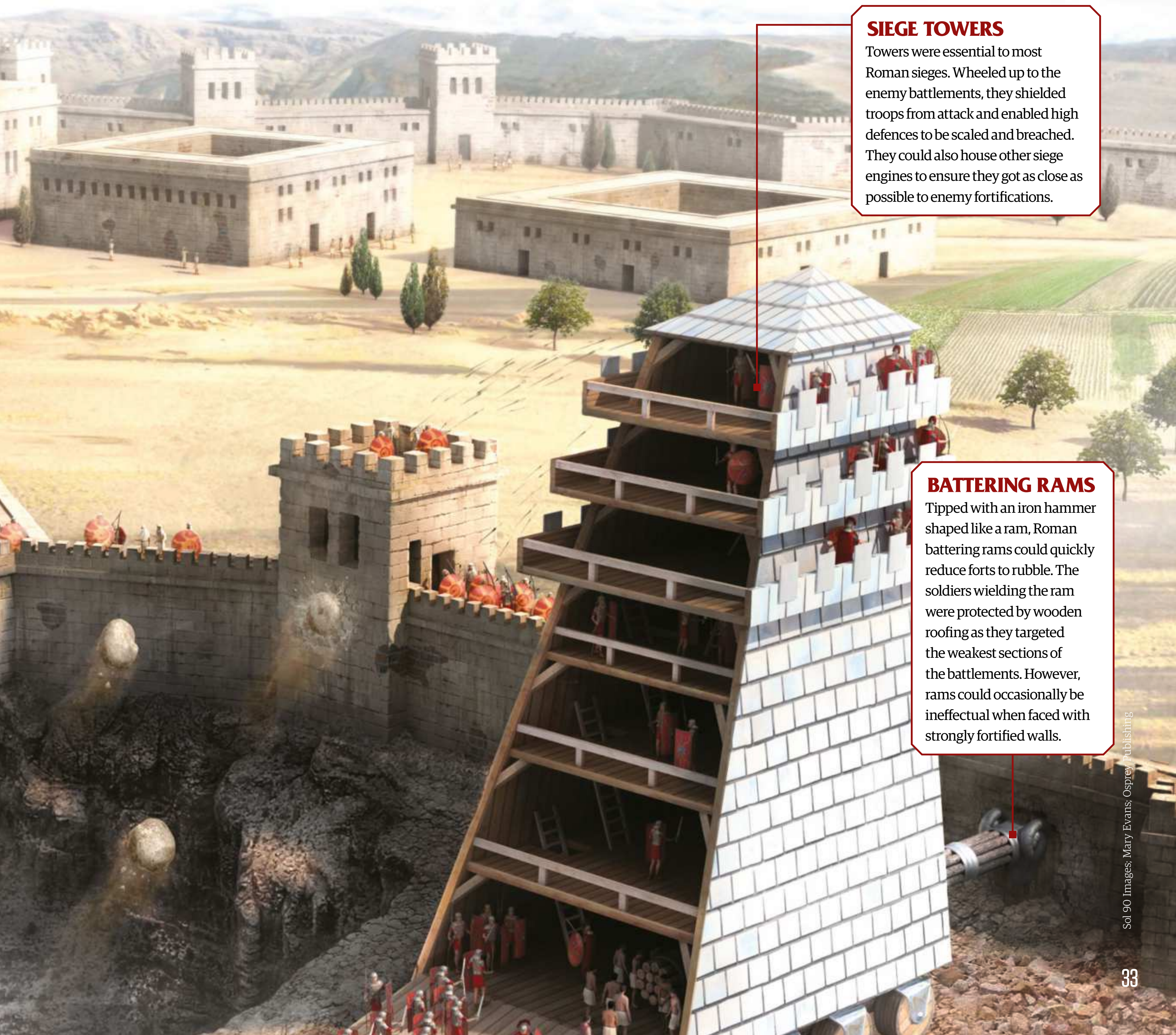
If getting close to the walls wasn't an option, attacks could be made from a distance using onagers. These catapults hurled rocks against the battlements from range using torsion mechanics. They were also used to target walls and even archers.



BALLISTA

Rather than solely targeting the walls, ballistae were used against infantry. Shooting giant metal bolts over 300 metres, the ballista could strike fear into the heart of the enemy. This siege engine was the bigger, far more destructive brother of the smaller scorpion.





SIEGE TOWERS

Towers were essential to most Roman sieges. Wheeled up to the enemy battlements, they shielded troops from attack and enabled high defences to be scaled and breached. They could also house other siege engines to ensure they got as close as possible to enemy fortifications.

BATTERING RAMS

Tipped with an iron hammer shaped like a ram, Roman battering rams could quickly reduce forts to rubble. The soldiers wielding the ram were protected by wooden roofing as they targeted the weakest sections of the battlements. However, rams could occasionally be ineffectual when faced with strongly fortified walls.

Sol 90 Images; Mary Evans; Osprey Publishing

MEDIEVAL MARAUDERS

36 THE HUNS: SCOURGE OF EUROPE
With the Roman Empire on its knees, Attila turned his gaze upon Europe, unleashing his ruthless armies and plundering vast swathes of the continent. Discover how these nomadic warriors brought the West to heel

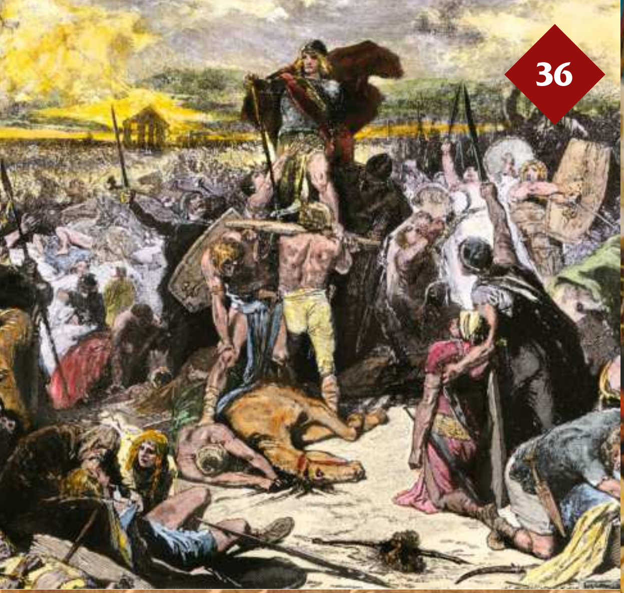
42 KNIGHTS TEMPLAR
Unshakeable in their faith and fanatical in their desire to expel the 'infidels' from the Holy Land, these Christian knights waged war against Islam for four centuries. Prepare to don your great helm and pick up your sword as we chart the rise of this ancient military order

52 MIGHT OF THE MONGOLS
Learn how a destitute nomad managed to unite the warring tribes of Mongolia into an unstoppable force that would go on to conquer the largest contiguous empire the world has ever known

60 SIX MONGOL SACKINGS
By combining cunning, tenacity and groundbreaking weaponry the merciless Mongol hordes smashed their way into many ancient cities. From the walls of Samarkand to the towers of Baghdad, nothing could stand in the way of history's most-feared warriors

62 DEATH OF THE SAMURAI
Discover how Japan's elite fighters struggled to find their place in an ever-changing world

68 AGE OF THE NINJA
When the warlords of Japan needed a rival dead or an enemy stronghold sabotaged, there was only ever one group for the job - the ninja. Beware of the shadows...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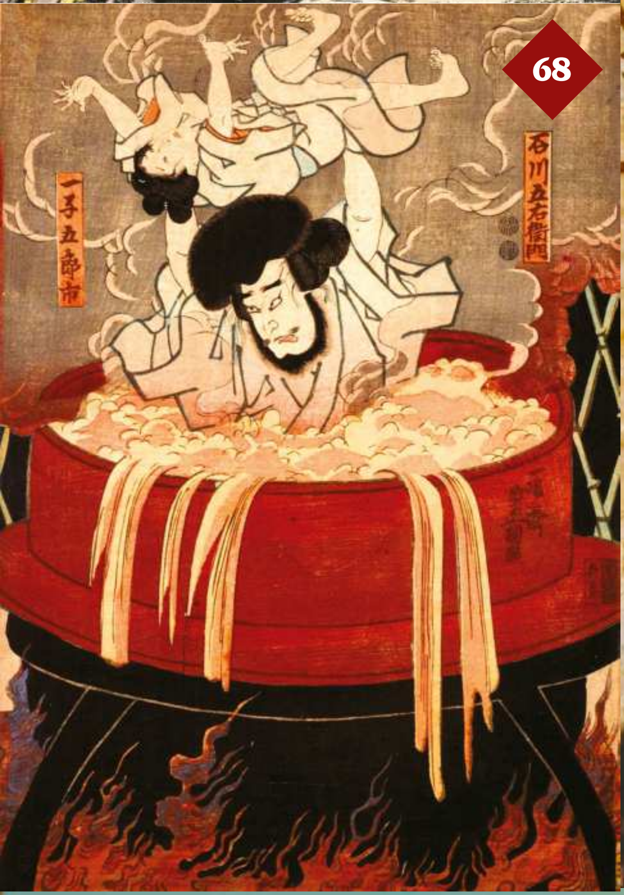
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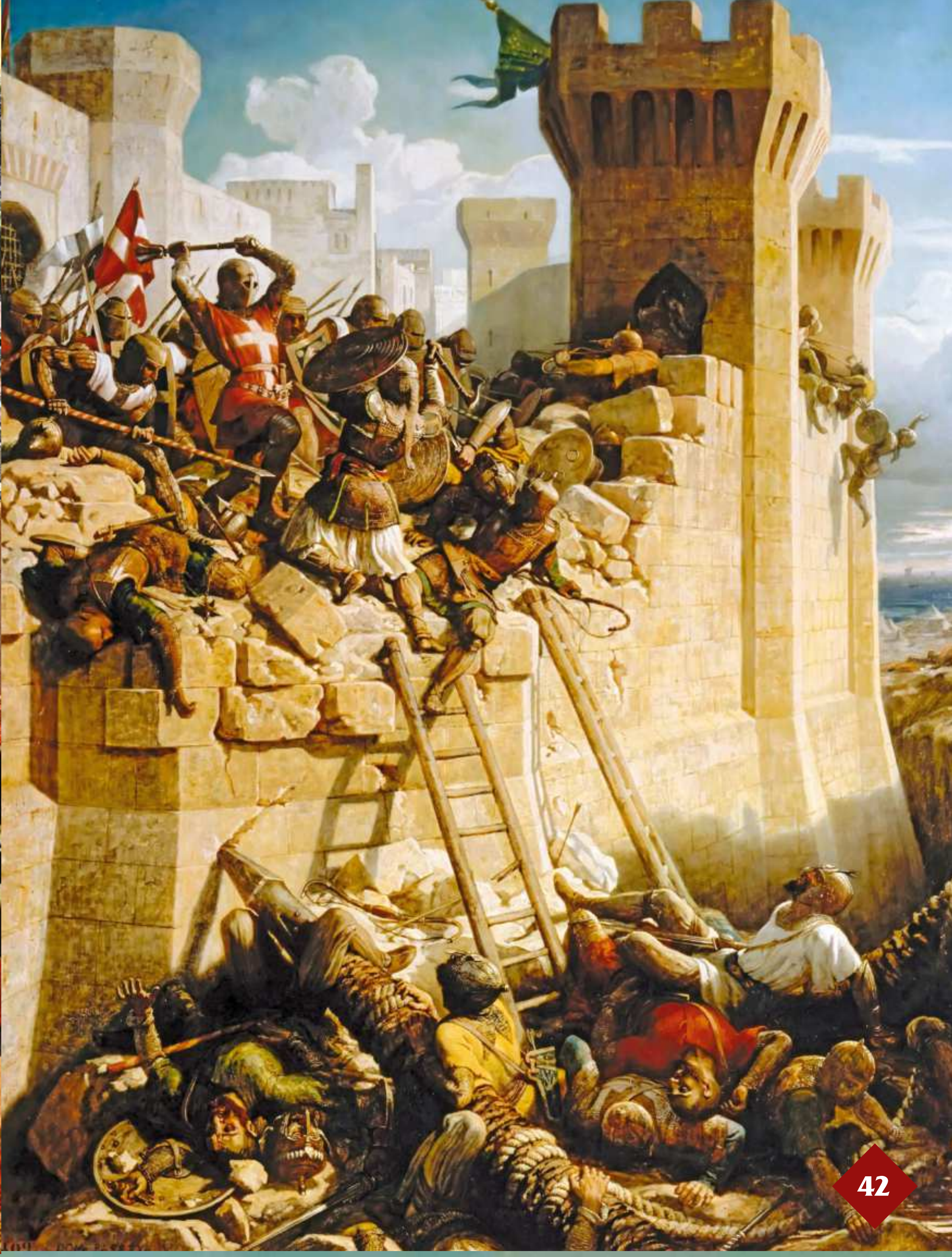
石川五右衛門
一子五郎市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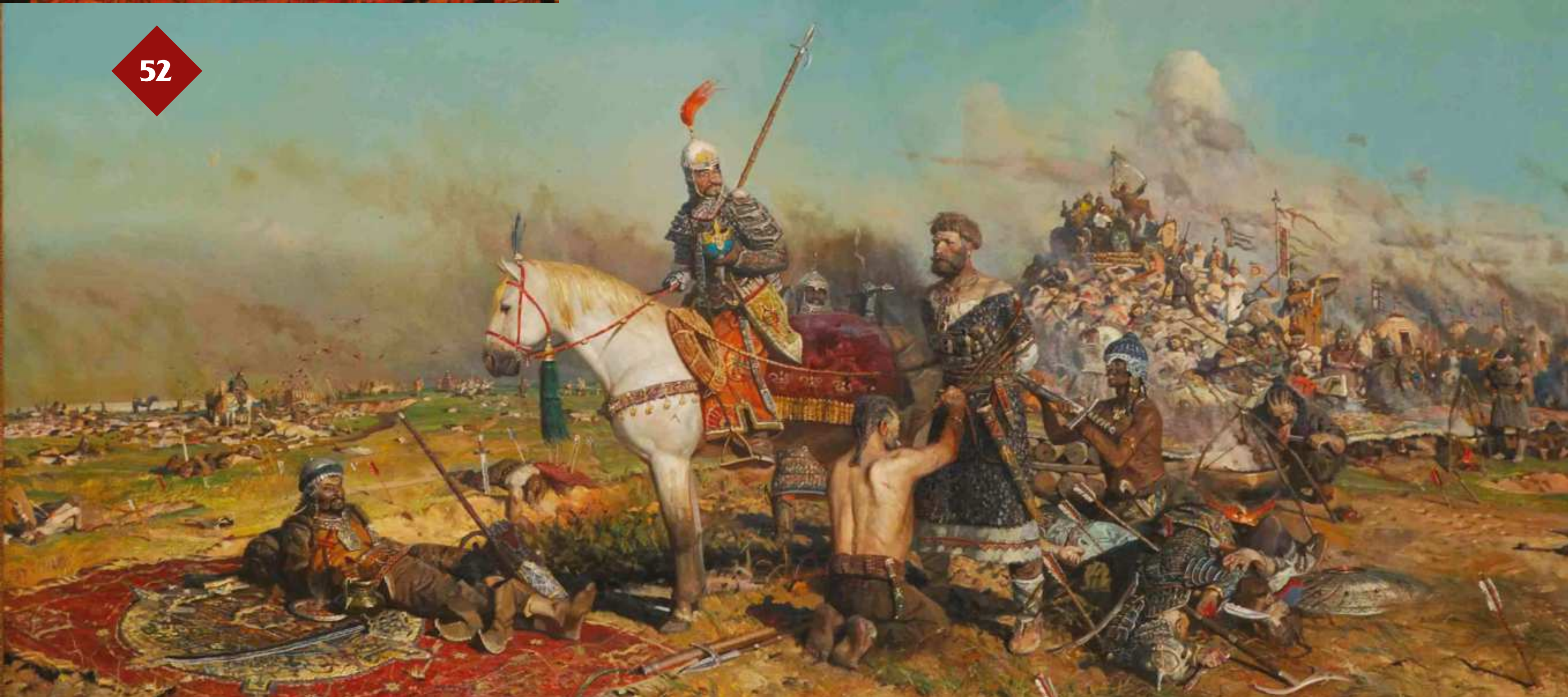
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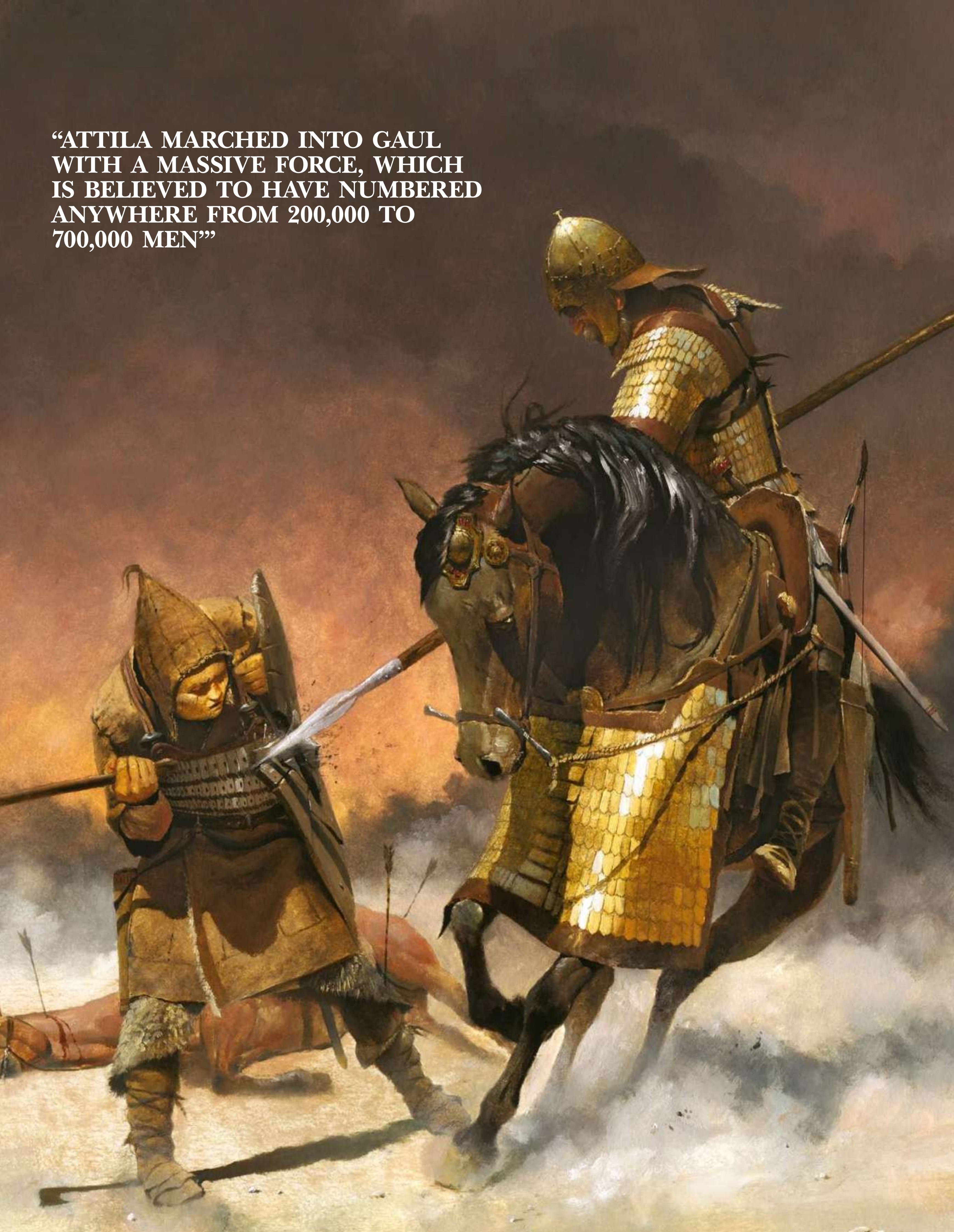
“ATTILA MARCHED INTO GAUL WITH A MASSIVE FORCE, WHICH IS BELIEVED TO HAVE NUMBERED ANYWHERE FROM 200,000 TO 700,000 MEN”



THE SCOURGE OF EUROPE

BY THE 4TH CENTURY, THE HUNNIC HORDE TURNED ITS ATTENTION TO THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE, INTENT ON CONQUEST AND PLUNDER

By 376, Rome was in a sorry state, a shadow of its former glory. The Eastern and Western empires found hosts of barbarians appearing on their borders, with Huns quite suddenly spilling out of the eastern Steppes of Asia and pushing westwards of the Black Sea. This movement disrupted many of the barbarian peoples along the way, such as the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Alans and Vandals who were settled in Eastern Europe, driving them towards the Romans borders.

Ironically, however, the Huns would first cross swords with the Romans as mercenaries, employed by the very people who were running from them: the Goths. These forces soon overran the border defences of the empire to the extent that hostile armies roved unchecked across the plains of Eastern Europe like the 'ashes of Mount Etna'.

In 395, the Huns launched the first of many assaults on the Eastern Roman Empire. At this time they were not a unified force but rather a host of war bands and petty chieftains out for personal glory and plunder. This would change when a man named Attila and his brother Bleda seized command in 434. The Huns proceeded to cut a bloody swathe through Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. So great was the slaughter that the dead were said to be countless and accounts speak of Attila astride his horse laughing at the destruction wrought in his name.

With the east suitably pacified, Attila turned his gaze towards the Western Empire, the other major power in Europe. The most accepted catalyst for the impending invasion came in a strange guise. Honoria, sister to Emperor Valentinian III, had been locked away in seclusion after a torrid love affair had seen her partner executed. For this punishment she was determined to make trouble for her brother, so in 450 she smuggled a message and her ring to Attila, asking that he become her champion. Attila took this invitation as a marriage proposal and requested that the dowry be half the Western Empire.

This was probably just a ploy to give his invasion an air of legitimacy and upon discovering what his sister had done, Emperor Valentinian sent messages to Attila explaining the mistake. He stated that the marriage - and substantial dowry - were not on the negotiating table. Upon hearing this, Attila marched into Gaul with a massive force, which is believed to have numbered anywhere from 200,000 to 700,000 men. While these numbers seem fancifully large, the number of men the Huns brought to bear would have been massive for 5th-century Europe. The men who marched with Attila were not just Huns; the army boasted a mix of allied tribes including Ostrogoths and Franks.

The early tactics of the Huns, like the Mongols who would come hundreds of years after, were a revelation to European warfare. Horsemen would unleash flights of arrows followed by cavalry charges, running rings around the heavy infantry favoured by the Romans. However, the Hunnic war machine would evolve when it reached Roman territory. The plains of Europe were not as large as the Steppes and simply could not provide enough grazing ground for all the Hunnic horses. This meant the Huns were forced to make a shift towards a more conventional field army as they marched westwards.

Attila's exploits in the East had solidified his reputation for cruelty. Before advancing on Gaul in 443 he had turned his attention towards the city of Naissus on the River Danube. The Huns descended and devastated the city and surrounding area, but not before massacring the entire population. The death and destruction was on such a massive scale that Roman ambassadors, who were passing through several years later to meet with Attila, found the riverbanks were still filled with human bones. The stench of death and decay was so overpowering that no one would enter the city.

Attila's formidable force burned its way across Gaul, laying waste to many towns; Strasbourg, Metz, Cologne, Amiens and Reims all fell to the advancing armies. These unfortunate cities were looted, burned and their populations slain - the Huns were not interested in settlement, showing that they were not like other nomadic invaders. However, they demonstrated great aptitude in siege warfare, possibly learned from conflicts with China or observed while employed as mercenaries in the Roman army. Their use of battering rams and rolling siege towers shocked the West to its core: here was a barbarian army that could not only trample Rome's legions in a pitched battle but also crack open even the strongest fortified cities. Destruction on a massive scale swept across Europe, with cities like Paris being spared only because of their small and seemingly worthless size.

Standing against the onslaught that descended on Gaul was a military general and statesman named Flavius Aetius, who would later be known as the 'last of the Romans'. A dominating influence over Valentinian III, Aetius had done all he could to hold the Roman world together after the numerous setbacks suffered over the past few years. He was perhaps uniquely qualified to lead the counter-attack, as he had previously been sent as a hostage to live among the Huns. With a deep knowledge of Hunnic life, an ability to speak their language and even experience hiring Hunnic mercenaries in military campaigns, Aetius possessed strong tactical knowledge of the Hunnic army.

The Roman general had been anticipating an invasion on the West from at least 443, so when the Huns began their assault almost a decade later, he was ready for it. Both Gaul and Italy

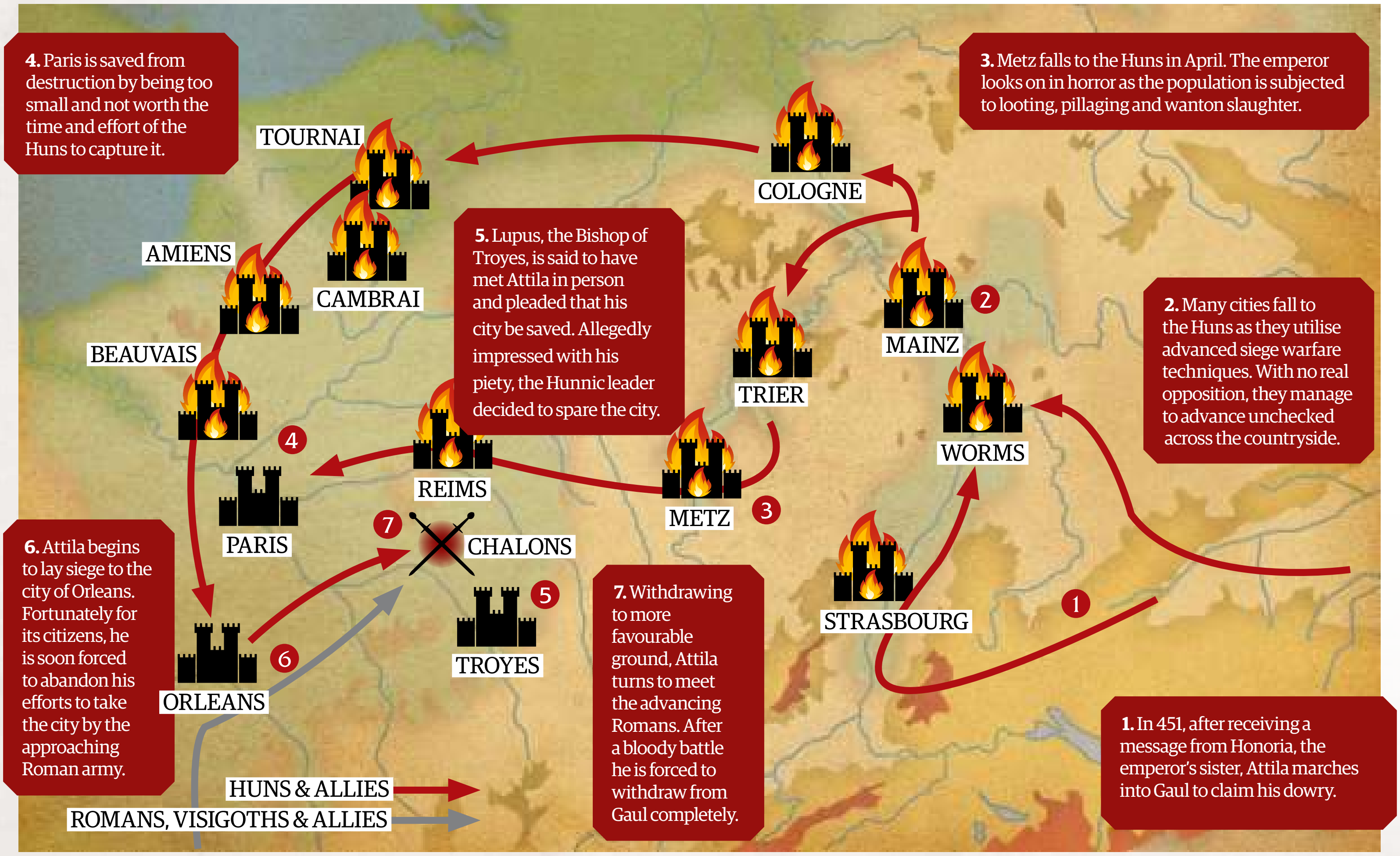
ATILA · FLAGELLVM
DEI

This Renaissance medal shows a profile depiction of Attila with his title, 'The scourge of God', visible in Latin

> **"STANDING AGAINST THE ONSLAUGHT WAS A GENERAL AND STATESMAN NAMED FLAVIUS AETIUS, WHO WOULD LATER BE KNOWN AS THE 'LAST OF THE ROMANS'"**

THE INVASION OF GAUL

Meeting very little resistance at first, Attila was free to sack the cities of Gaul at will



1. In 451, after receiving a message from Honoria, the emperor's sister, Attila marches into Gaul to claim his dowry.

2. Many cities fall to the Huns as they utilise advanced siege warfare techniques. With no real opposition, they manage to advance unchecked across the countryside.

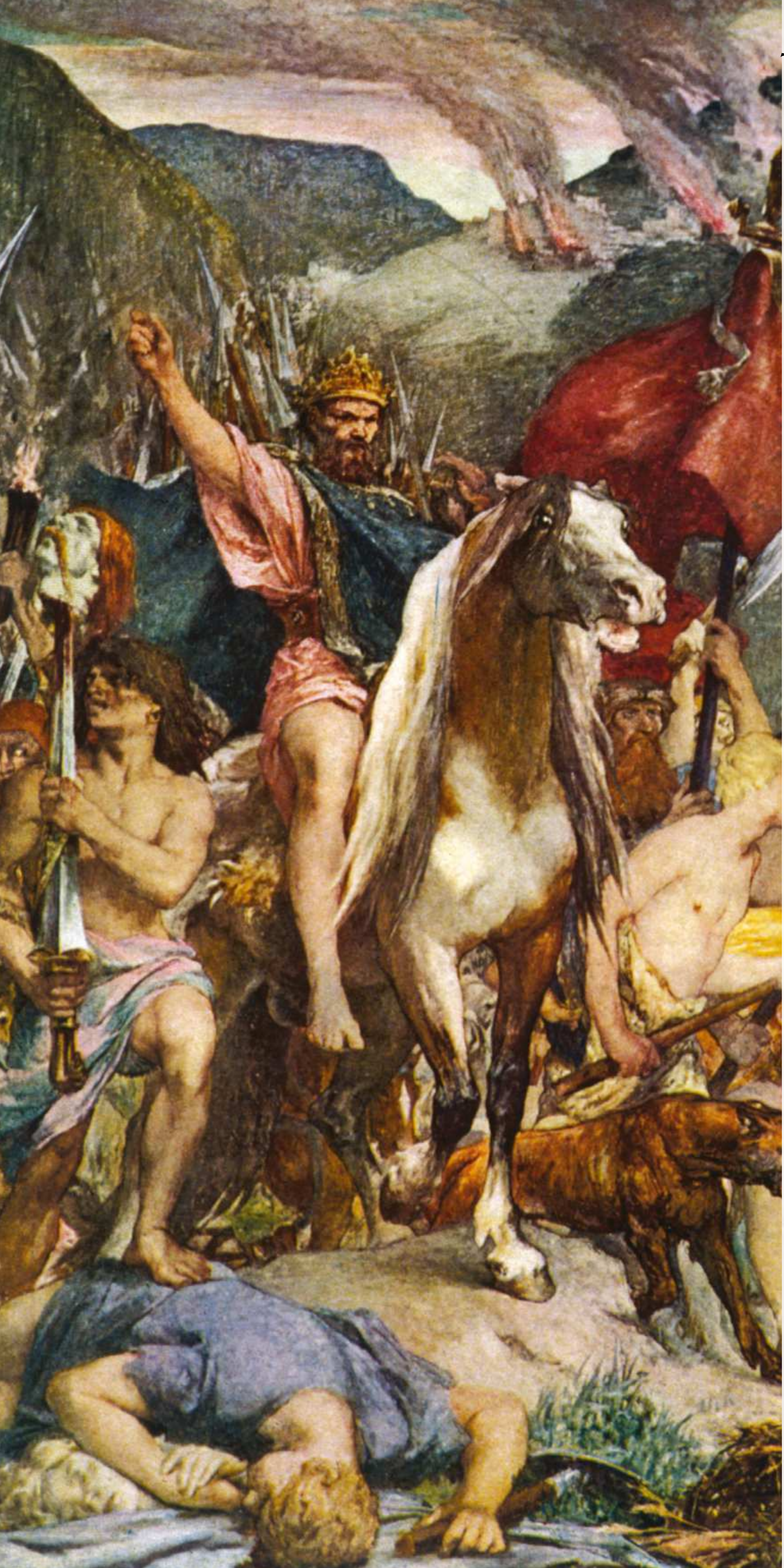
3. Metz falls to the Huns in April. The emperor looks on in horror as the population is subjected to looting, pillaging and wanton slaughter.

4. Paris is saved from destruction by being too small and not worth the time and effort of the Huns to capture it.

5. Lupus, the Bishop of Troyes, is said to have met Attila in person and pleaded that his city be saved. Allegedly impressed with his piety, the Hunnic leader decided to spare the city.

6. Attila begins to lay siege to the city of Orleans. Fortunately for its citizens, he is soon forced to abandon his efforts to take the city by the approaching Roman army.

7. Withdrawing to more favourable ground, Attila turns to meet the advancing Romans. After a bloody battle he is forced to withdraw from Gaul completely.



FLAGELLUM DEI

FEARED BY FOE AND ALLY ALIKE, ATTILA WAS A LEADER WHO WOULD LEAD THE HUNS ON A CONQUEST THAT SHOOK ROME TO ITS FOUNDATIONS

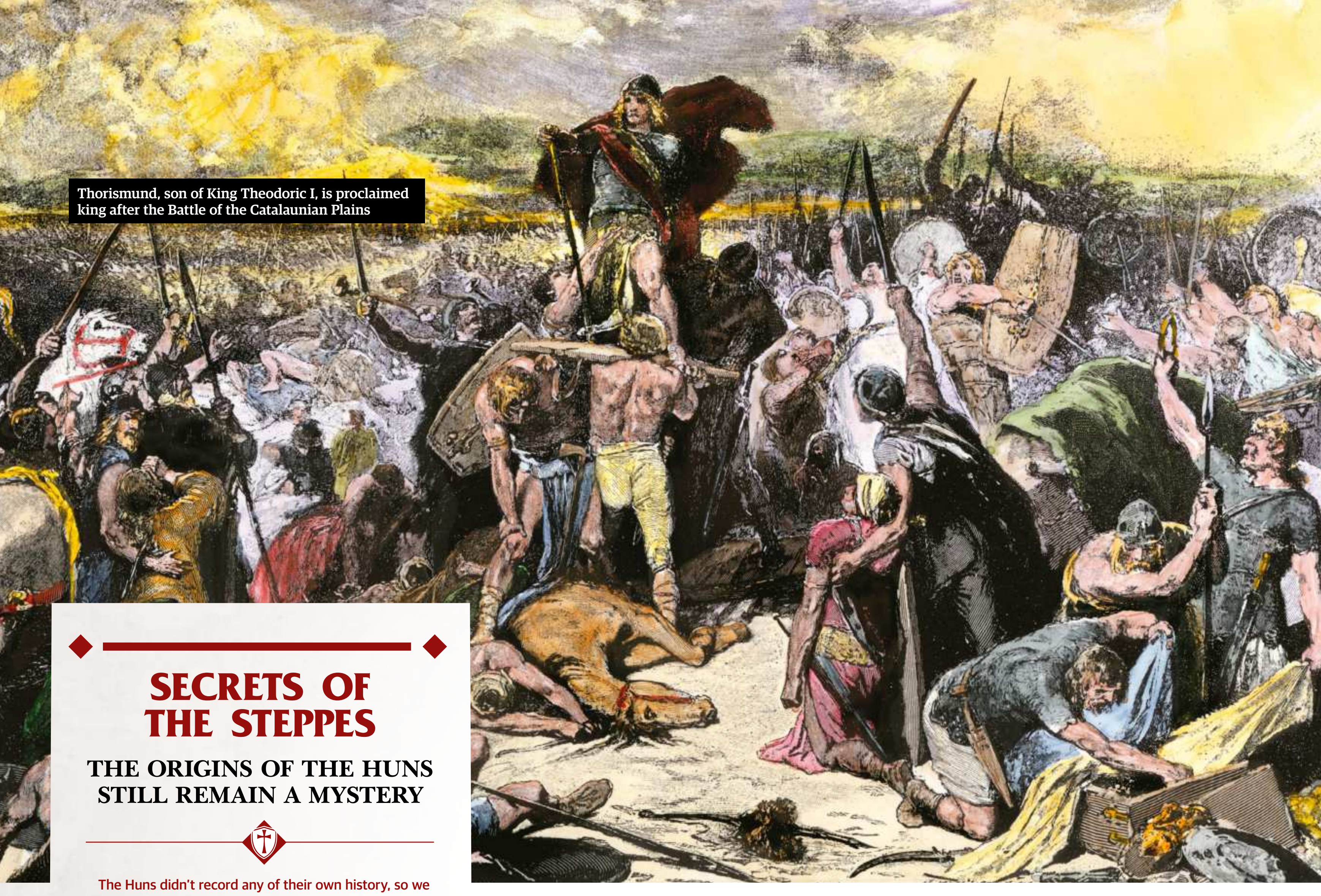
Attila, a man Christian scholars would come to call 'flagellum Dei', the scourge of God, was the most fearsome leader of the Huns. Usually interpreted as 'little father', the name reportedly was given by his grandfather who saw that the destiny of the Huns was in Attila's hands. Attila began ruling the Huns with his brother Bleda in 434.

To further solidify his rule and live up to his namesake, Attila 'found' the Sword of Mars, the Roman god of war. A shepherd tending his fields unearthed the blade and gifted it to Attila, who saw this as a sign from the gods to conquer the entire world. Gaining the sword is said to have made his brother Bleda 'resign his sceptre and his life', which he did in 445, when he is said to have been murdered by Attila. Whether any of this is true is highly questionable, but what is clear is that Attila had a powerful symbol on his side.

As a ruler Attila was hard and pragmatic, leading the Huns from their nomadic past to forge the Hunnic Empire into an all-conquering force that seemed unstoppable. Mirroring the Romans, he built a fixed capital in modern-day Hungary to accommodate his court. He lived a Spartan existence, never overindulging on food or alcohol and eating with simple wooden utensils. He left the feasting and fine living to his subordinates, who ate off silver plates and drank from jewel-encrusted goblets.

For a man whose ambition devoured an empire, his death was rather ignoble; a fatal nosebleed on his wedding night, although there are suggestions his new bride Ildico, a Gothic tribeswoman, stabbed him.

> **"AS A RULER ATTILA WAS HARD AND PRAGMATIC, LEADING THE HUNS FROM THEIR NOMADIC PAST TO FORGE THE HUNNIC EMPIRE INTO AN ALL-CONQUERING FORCE THAT SEEMED UNSTOPPABLE"**



Thorismund, son of King Theodoric I, is proclaimed king after the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains

SECRETS OF THE STEPPES

THE ORIGINS OF THE HUNS STILL REMAIN A MYSTERY

The Huns didn't record any of their own history, so we have to rely on mostly Roman proto-history sources for our information. Many early writers write damning accounts of the Huns, painting them as savages who wore rags and lived in the saddle, shunning fire and shelter and speaking in a harsh, guttural tongue.

Most of these accounts are from men who had never seen a Hun and were written to be the complete antithesis of the Romans. To challenge this savage appearance, we can turn to a Roman named Priscus who spent time at Attila's court. What he found was not a collection of tents but a palace made of stone that could accommodate Attila's entire entourage. Here fine embroidery, made by the wives of Attila's warriors, was worn, complicated table etiquette was followed and entertainment came in the form of songs and poetry. This is hardly the typical image of a saddle-dwelling nomad.

The Huns' nomadic origins are still a hot topic of discussion among scholars. A popular theory is that they were related to the Xiongnu, a Eurasian Steppe people dating from c.300 BCE. These nomadic groups were adept with the bow and possessed great riding skills like the Huns, but there has been recent archaeological evidence that negates this claim. It is most likely that the Huns originated from an area between the Altai Mountains and the Caspian Sea, which is located around modern-day Kazakhstan.

The Huns hailed from the east but just how far is still debated

> "ATTILA SET ABOUT BUILDING A FUNERAL PYRE MADE OF SADDLES, RESOLVING TO TAKE HIS OWN LIFE IN THE FLAMES RATHER THAN SUFFER THE IGNOMINY OF DEFEAT OR SURRENDER"

were scoured for men fit for service, but these musters could not swell the ranks of the Roman army to the desired number. Rather than face Attila with a smaller force, Aetius turned to the various barbarian peoples populating the empire who possessed both strong military forces and an equally strong hatred of the Huns.

Aetius even reached out to the Visigoths, who had been in conflict with Rome ever since their appearance on the eastern borders of the empire. They might not have seemed the surest allies, but in a pragmatic move their king, Theodoric I, and his son Thorismund saw that the Huns heralded a much bigger threat than Rome and joined the alliance. Another group to join the alliance, the Burgundians, harboured a deep resentment of the Huns, as in 437 CE, 20,000 of their people were slaughtered by an alliance of Huns and Romans. The Romans had extended the olive branch and settled them in territory west of Geneva. The Alans, settled in the area around Orleans, also joined the Romans, but their loyalty was again questionable. In this way Aetius spawned multiple alliances out of mutual necessity, not trust.

By June 451, Attila's marauding army reached Orleans - about 250 miles west of the Rhine - but it was soon forced to turn around as Aetius' coalition finally caught up. With these forces bearing down, Attila decided to lift the siege on the city and fall back to more favourable terrain. He chose to meet the Romans on the Catalaunian Plains somewhere between Chalon and Troyes. On the rolling green fields of Champagne, the two armies drew up battle lines, with Aetius deploying first, sending the Visigoths to anchor his right flank on some high ground. He then placed himself on the left flank, with the Alans under their leader, Sangiban, in the centre, where both he and Theodoric could ensure his loyalty.

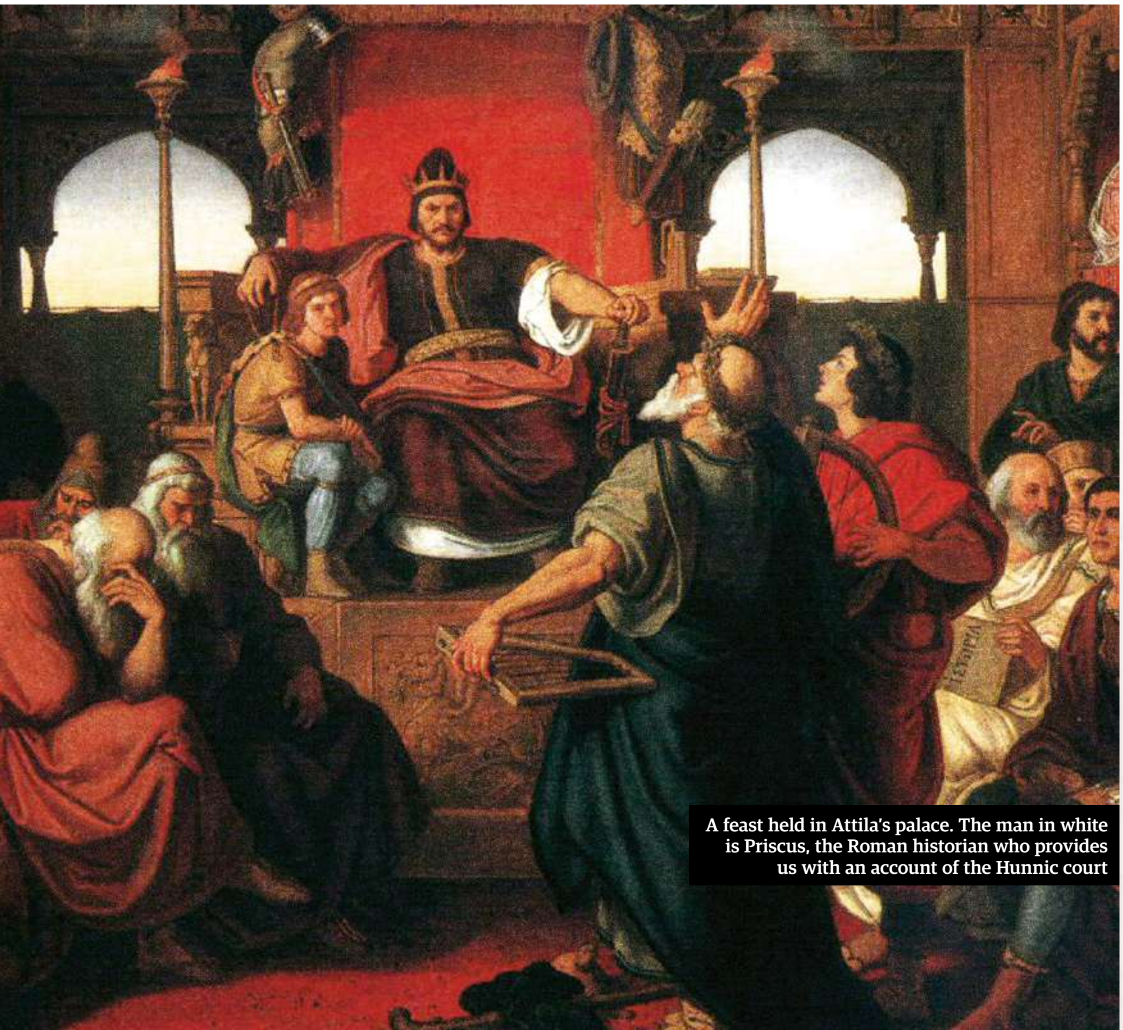
In response, Attila marched to meet the alliance in the afternoon so that should the battle drag on, the setting sun would be in the eyes of his enemies and provide a distraction. He stationed himself and his crack Hun troops in the centre of the line, leaving his flanks secured by his Ostrogoth allies. The first day saw fierce fighting around the Visigoth position, as they threw the Huns back from the hill time and again. Heavily armoured cavalry were key in this clash, enabling the Goths to hold the high ground. Disaster would strike, however, as Theodoric fell in the battle. Accounts of his death are - like all accounts of the battle - confused; he was either struck by a spear or trampled to death when he fell from his horse leading a charge.

In the centre of the battle the Huns fared better, routing the Alans and the Roman centre line. Losses on either side mounted up so high that the centre of the battlefield ran red with blood. One chronicler recounts that the "fight grew fierce, confused, monstrous, unrelenting… like no ancient time has ever recorded". In an attempt to end the slaughter, the Gothic cavalry charged Attila's household unit, coming dangerously close to killing the Hunnic leader and forcing him to retire from the battle. The Huns retreated to their camp and fortified it with wagons, subjecting any who came near to volleys of arrows.

After withdrawing, Attila set about building a funeral pyre made of saddles, resolving to take his own life in the flames rather than suffer the ignominy of defeat or surrender. However, his generals managed to persuade him that the retreat was a tactical one and he relented. After a tense standoff, the two sides struck their camps and left. While an accurate casualty list does not exist, both the Roman and Hunnic armies had suffered enormous losses. Although this was a setback for Attila, his military might was far from broken. Even so, the Huns had been bloodied and Attila's aura of invincibility lay shattered, revealing him to be but a mere mortal after all.

Despite having his enemy on the back foot, Aetius could not deal the hammer blow to the Huns, the paradox being that for the continued survival of Roman Gaul, Attila needed to stay alive. Attila's death at this time would have brought about a severe succession crisis that might have heralded a fresh attack upon Gaul, which wasn't something it could withstand, especially after such a costly battle. The Western Empire simply did not have the manpower to manage the flow of refugees fleeing from the Hunnic Empire and counter the Goth advances from southwest France.

Another reason is that since the Huns - the common enemy of both the Romans and Goths - had been defeated, Aetius was keen to break up his coalition force as soon as possible, lest his allies decide to take advantage of Rome's weakened state. Luckily for Aetius, Thorismud, the newly crowned king of the Visigoths, wanted to return to Toulouse to shore up his claim and secure his kingdom. With his pride wounded, Attila withdrew from Gaul and turned his attention to Italy. Aetius had succeeded in driving the Huns from Gaul, but he was soon once more called to action to save the Western Empire from enemies much closer to home.



A feast held in Attila's palace. The man in white is Priscus, the Roman historian who provides us with an account of the Hunnic court

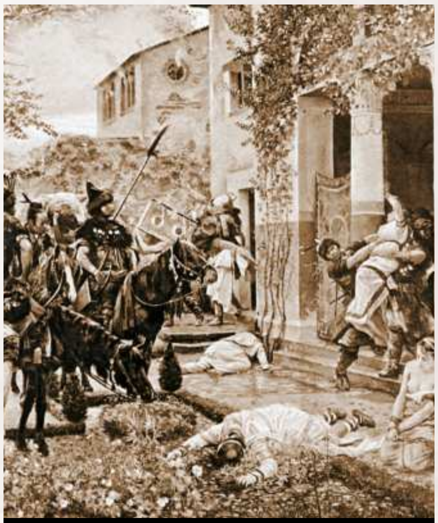
END OF AN EMPIRE

CRIPPLED BY INTERNAL POLITICS AND CENTURIES OF WORLD DOMINANCE, THE ROMAN EMPIRE WAS WEAKENED AND UNPREPARED TO SURVIVE THE BARBARIAN MIGRATION

Rome had changed much from its glory days under rulers like Caesar and Augustus. The fracturing of the empire into its Eastern and Western sections in 379 was the start of the slow decline of this once mighty imperial power. Perhaps one of the most obvious signs of this was that in the West the city of Rome itself was no longer the centre of power, with the seat of government and capital being moved to Milan and then Ravenna. Rome stood as a crumbling mausoleum to the achievements of its pre-Christian past, now resigned to the pages of history rather than lived out.

The primary catalyst for this change was the influx of barbarian peoples from the east – many of whom were fleeing the Hunnic advance – who chose to either settle or make war with the Romans in what is called the 'volkerwanderung', or 'great migration'. Being martial peoples, it did not take long for the likes of the Visigoths, Ostrogoths and Vandals to be employed as mercenaries and later regulars in Rome's military.

The Roman army of the 5th century was very different in appearance and composition than the armies of 'classic' Rome. The heavy infantry that had served in the legions so well in the past were proving extremely vulnerable to Gothic cavalry and were crushed in engagements such as the Battle of Arbogast. In response they shed their heavy armour and adopted lighter protection that greatly increased mobility across the battlefield.



Hunnic soldiers pause to loot and sack a Roman villa during their advance through Gaul

Images: Alamy, Jose Cabrera

THE WARRIORS OF GOD

SWORN TO POVERTY, CHASTITY AND HOLY WAR WITH GOD'S ENEMIES, THE FEARSOME WARRIOR MONKS OF THE MONASTIC ORDERS ENSURED CHRISTIAN POWER ENDURED IN THE EAST FOR ALMOST 200 YEARS

When Pope Urban II took his place at the head of the Roman church at the end of the 11th century, Christians and Muslims lived in tentative equanimity; no atrocities were rife. Yet this wily pontiff sought to boost papal authority, which had suffered a number of setbacks during the previous decades, and devised an ingenious plan. In 1095, when touring his homeland of France, he called for a crusade to reclaim Jerusalem from the 'infidel'. The Muslims had ruled the city for more than four-and-a-half centuries. Pope Urban now demanded its return.

Fortunately for those who answered his call, the Muslim world was in disarray and the warriors of the First Crusade - a rather motley crew - stormed Jerusalem in a bloody assault in July 1099. Those that remained after its fall founded the Frankish realm of Outremer and the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Christians flooded in and many sites in the Holy Land became places of pilgrimage for the devout - though travellers took great risks as they passed through hostile lands stalked by wild animals and yet wilder brigands.

The year 1119, for example, saw 300 pilgrims massacred at Easter near the shores of the River Jordan, while in the same year the Christians, edging their boundaries further into Muslim-held territory, suffered a crushing defeat at Sarmarda. The Christian army of 700 knights and 3,000 infantry was slain or enslaved in what became known as the Battle of the Field of Blood.

It was against this backdrop that the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller emerged as military forces, pledging their swords for the protection of pilgrims. They blended monastic discipline with a commitment to fight for their god. With their bodies protected by iron and their souls clothed in the breastplate of faith - according to their great Cistercian champion - they flowered into mighty enterprises and became the bedrock for the Christian West's tenuous hold on the Levant.

> "THE MUSLIMS HAD RULED THE CITY OF JERUSALEM FOR MORE THAN FOUR-AND-A-HALF CENTURIES. POPE URBAN NOW DEMANDED ITS RETURN"

RECRUITING THE MONKS OF WAR

Who could join the prestigious Order of the Temple and what did membership entail?

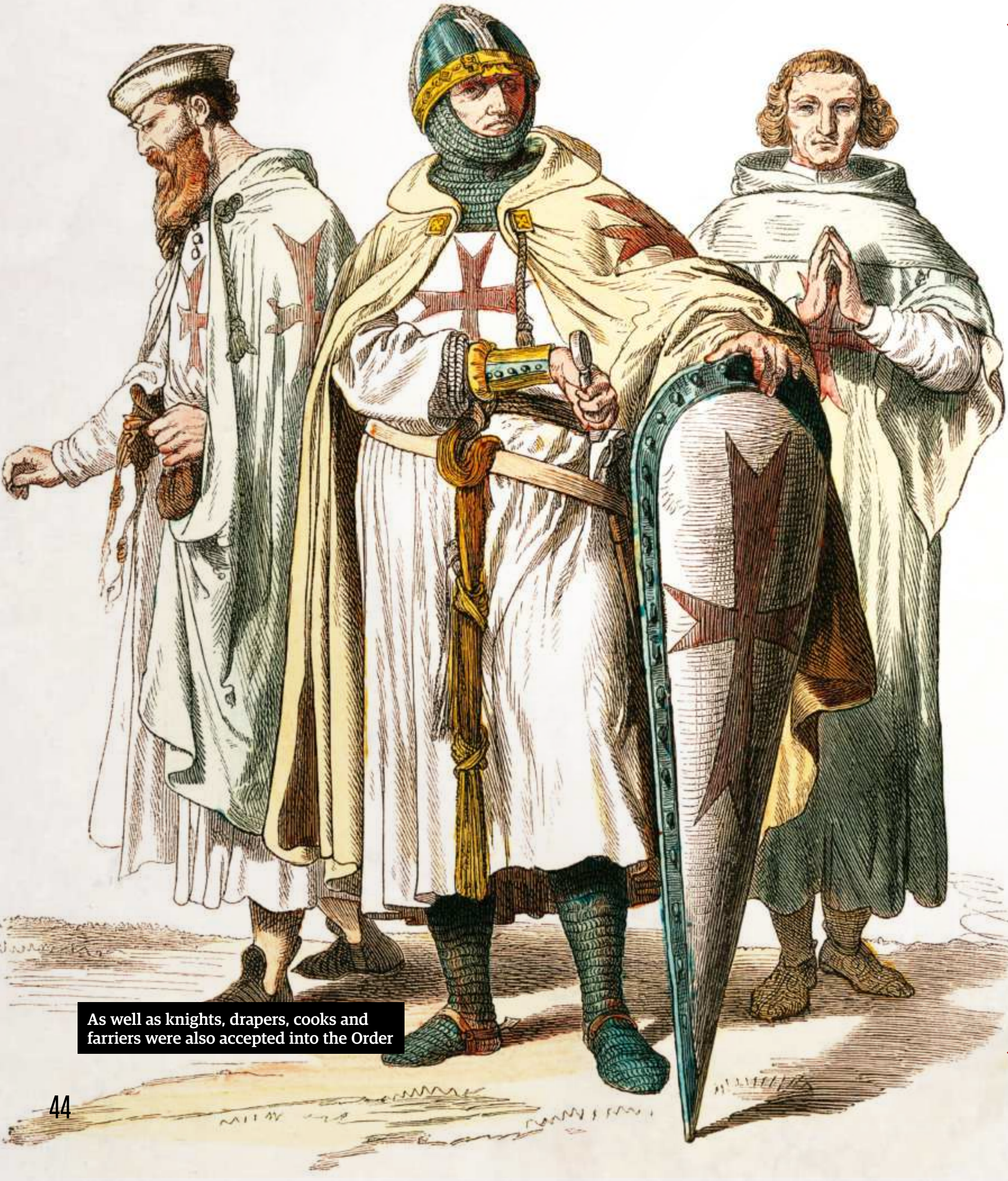
The intention of the original Templars was to be 'poor fellow soldiers of Jesus Christ', and Bernard of Clairvaux had insisted that there was to be no distinction of persons within the order. Yet old habits die hard and in the world of chivalry status was everything; certainly by the middle of the 12th century the order demanded that a man must be of knightly origin if he were to wear the white mantle emblazoned with its distinctive red cross.

Not every member needed to hail from knightly stock, however, so the sergeants wore a black tunic with a red cross on and either a black or brown mantle. The sergeants' armour, too, was less elaborate than the knights', consisting of an iron cap and sleeveless mail coat.

There may have been further graduation among the sergeant class, incorporating artisans as well as fighting men. The Rule makes note of 'the craftsmen brothers of the stables', presumably referring to the farriers, as well as 'mason brothers', who were needed to build fortifications. Cooks and blacksmiths were also recruited into the Order.

The mainstay of the Order remained the knights, of course. Married men could join but were not permitted to wear the white surcoat. Upon entry, newcomers surrendered secular clothing to the draper and were armed with standard equipment, along with two shirts, pairs of breeches and sets of hose. They also received a pair of white robes, a tunic and a belt. Each knight could have three horses and a squire, unless the master sanctioned more. The knight also carried campaign equipment - bedding, cooking utensils, sheets and the like - and when not at war was expected to live a monastic life, according to the Rule.

When on campaign the Templars and the Hospitallers were in the minority, fighting alongside Western crusaders or the Turcopoles, mercenaries who had been recruited from the local Muslim population. The latter also formed sizeable contingents in many garrisons. According to one source, just four brethren knights and 28 sergeants patrolled the Hospitaller fortress of Marqab, with the rest of the defending force being comprised of Muslim mercenaries.


As well as knights, drapers, cooks and farriers were also accepted into the Order

THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

FOUNDED: 1118
FOUNDER: Hugues de Paynes
HEADQUARTERS: Initially Temple Mount, Jerusalem; latterly in Cyprus

This powerful order arose from humble beginnings when in 1118/1119 Hugh de Payns, a knight from Champagne, formed a group of eight companions into a brotherhood sworn to protect the pilgrim route through Palestine. They found support from King Baldwin II of Jerusalem, who granted them accommodation in the complex of the Temple of Solomon, from which the order took its name.

Eager to protect pilgrims and the wealth they carried into the Holy Land, Baldwin seized upon the notion of a standing body of warriors in his kingdom, and perhaps in a bid to boost numbers, a letter was dispatched to the influential Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux who persuaded the Council of Troyes in 1128/1129 to recognise the fellowship as a religious order. It had a pronounced way of life, which demanded poverty and chastity and obedience to the pope. Spiritual rewards were conferred upon its members and numbers flourished.

Now, warriors dubbed 'poor fellow soldiers of Jesus Christ' could enjoy the spiritual rewards of the religious movements while remaining under arms. This was a radical move by the church — which had insisted previously that its professed religious members must remain men of peace — and it was formally confirmed by the papacy in 1139. The mightiest military order of the medieval period had been born.

Templar swords spilled blood in the name of Christ from the 1130s onwards, and they fought furiously for the defence of Outremer. Donations flooded in and the Temple Knights flourished, establishing houses across Europe to receive and administer their growing wealth. Eventually, the temporal power and wealth that they originally eschewed would precipitate their downfall.

HIERARCHY OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

THE GRAND MASTER

The supreme head with vast powers

THE SENESCHAL

The Grand Master's deputy, who carried the order's banner

THE MARSHALL

Head of the military establishment

THE COMMANDER OF THE LAND OF JERUSALEM

The treasurer

THE DRAPER

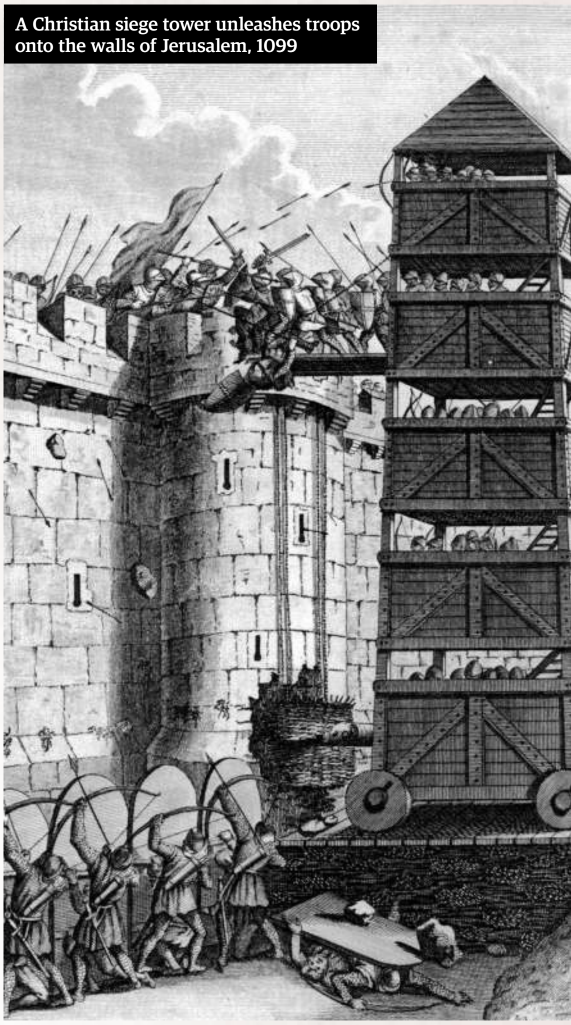
Issuer of clothing and distributor of gifts

REGIONAL COMMANDERS

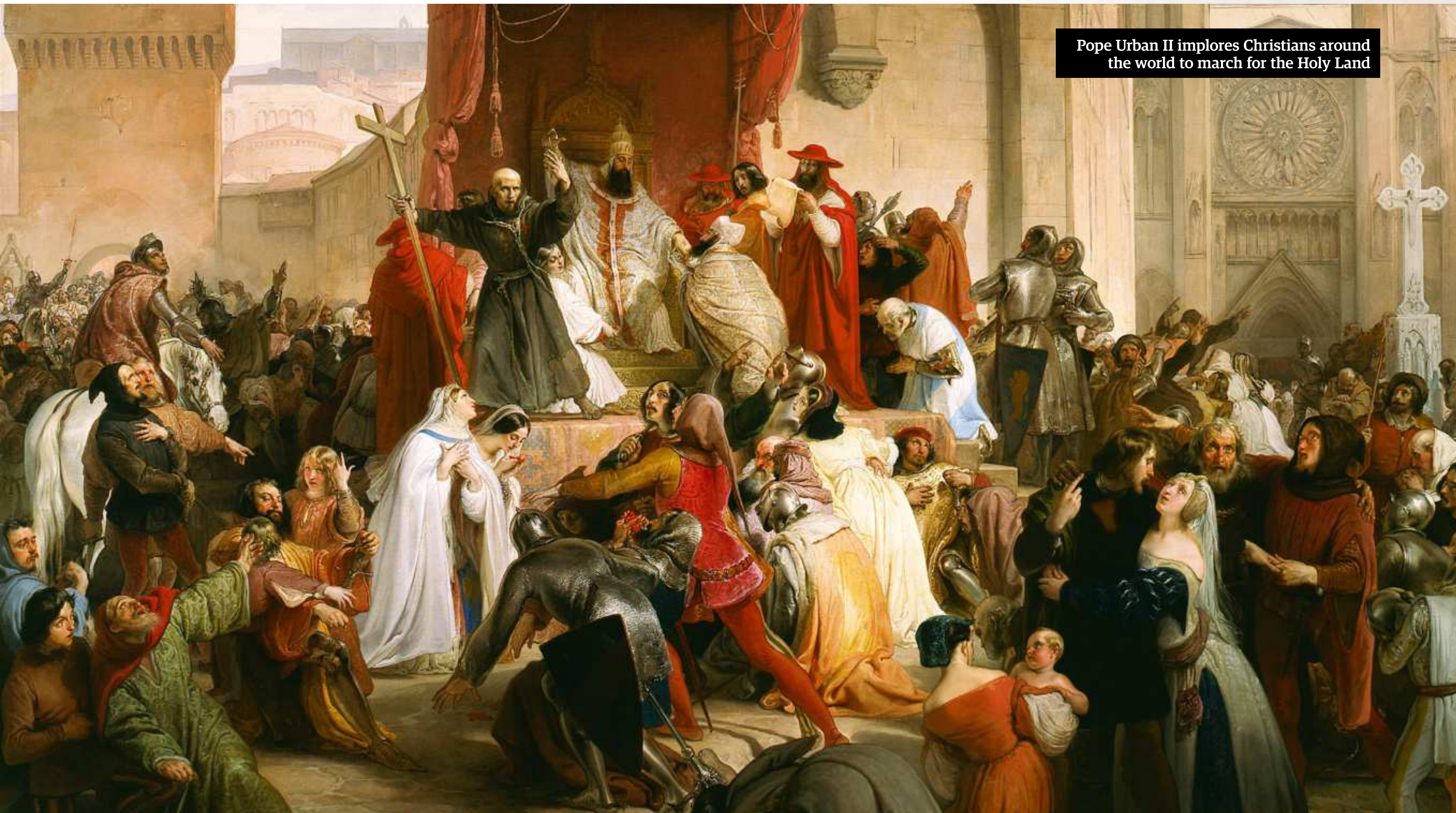
City of Jerusalem; Tripoli; Antioch; of the Knights;
Turcopolier; the Under-Marshal; the Standard-bearer; the Infirmarer

THE RANK-AND-FILE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

THE SERGEANTS
THE ARTISAN TEMPLARS



A Christian siege tower unleashes troops onto the walls of Jerusalem, 1099



Pope Urban II implores Christians around the world to march for the Holy Land

PROTECTING THE PILGRIM ROAD

It was while touring his homeland in 1095 that Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade, calling upon the chivalry of Europe to assist their brethren in the East and take revenge against Islam for the atrocities that the 'infidel' had supposedly meted out on Christians in the Holy Land.

In truth, peace reigned in the East, though tensions often simmered. Yet Urban's bid to boost papal power would change all that. His plea, pronounced at Clermont in France, entwined the Christian faith with military violence and initiated a period of hostility that sent thousands to their deaths. Holy war was engendered, and it was not only Europe's warrior-caste, but humble men, women and children, who flocked to his cause. It is thought that in the 12 months following his sermon up to 100,000 may have answered his call.

The crusade was a truly radical move, sanctifying bloodshed, which was anathema to the teachings of Christ. But the suggestions woven into the fabric of Urban's text offered the first crusaders enticements that were hard to resist. Many young knights sought adventure and the chance to make a name or win lands of their own; material greed undoubtedly played a part in the decisions of many.

Arguably the strongest incentive, however, was the prospect of salvation, a coveted prize to the 11th-century mind fraught with worry over the life hereafter. After all, what better way was there to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than by reclaiming Jerusalem, occupied by the Muslims since 638? "God has initiated in our time holy wars," wrote one contemporary, so that Christians "might find a new way of gaining salvation. And so they are not forced to abandon secular affairs completely."

Once the crusaders had taken Jerusalem amid much bloodletting in 1099, Outremer emerged, a land littered with sacred sites to which those unable to fight in the Holy Land's liberation flocked to curry God's favour. It was to protect these travellers - and then to fight for the kingdom itself - that the military orders were born.

CRUSADER STRONGHOLDS

CHASTEL-BLANC County of Tripoli

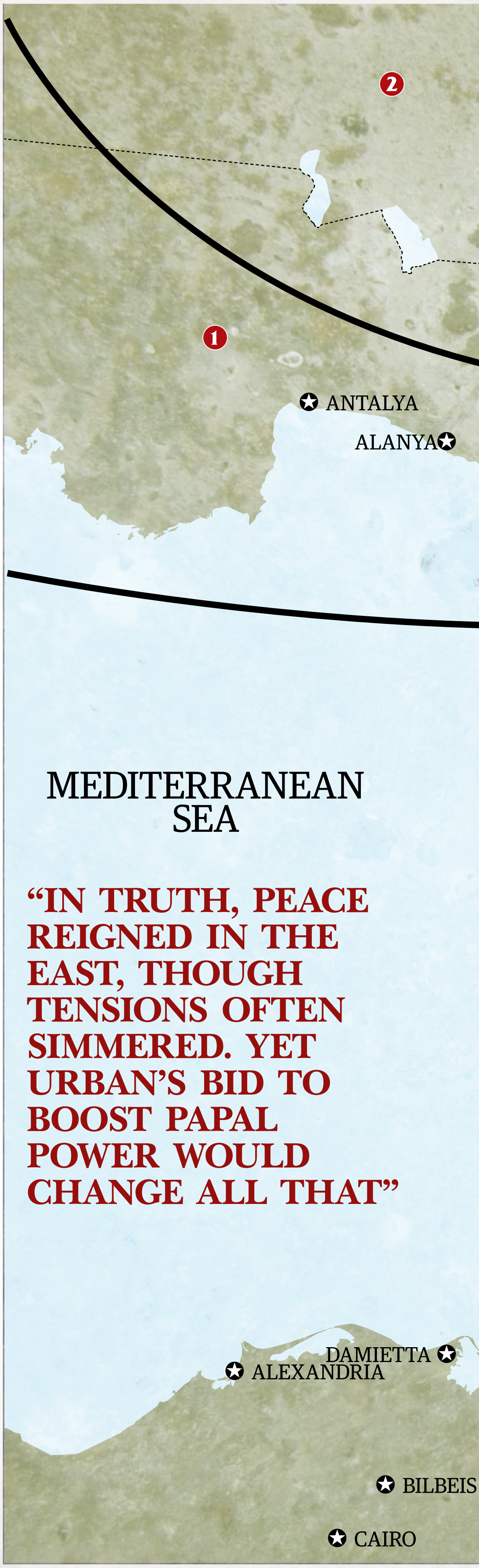
Among the many castles held by the Templars, their presence in the County of Tripoli was focused on Tortosa (Tartous) and Chastel-Blanc, the latter squatting 380 metres up in the Nusairi Mountains. The towering keep was rimmed by oval perimeter walls measuring 165 metres at their widest points. Men atop the keep could see the mighty Hospitaller citadel of Krak des Chevaliers to the southeast as well as their own fortress at Tortosa in the northwest.

KRAK DES CHEVALIERS County of Tripoli

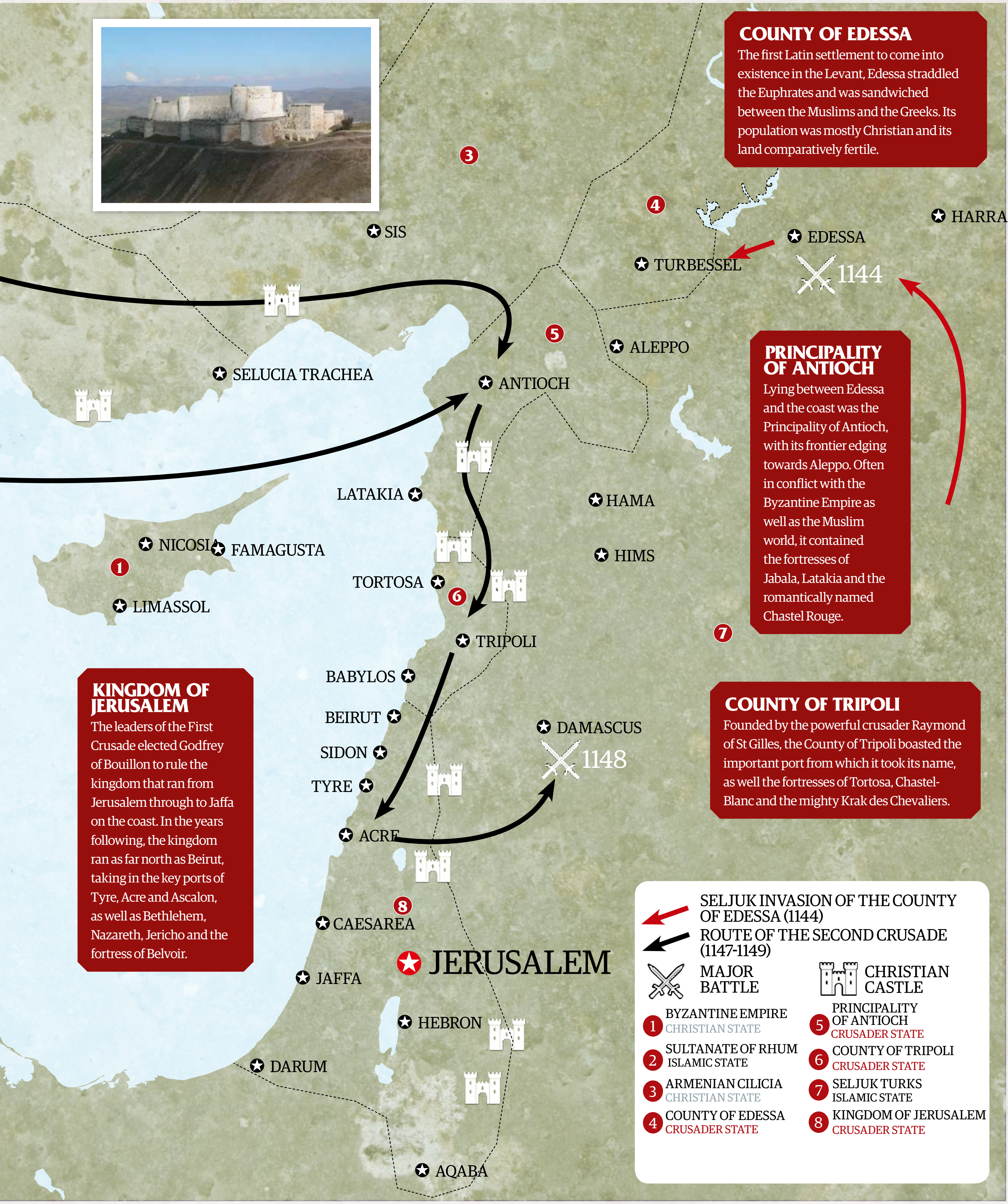
Arguably the most awesome military structure to survive from the medieval era, Krak was granted to the Knights Hospitaller in 1144, which held it until it finally fell in 1271. During this time it withstood 12 sieges and repelled attacks by the great Saladin. Able to house 2,000 men with supplies for many months, it was perfect for withstanding a siege. Indeed, it didn't fall through assault but through trickery and declining morale. When the Egyptian besieger Baibars finally pierced the outer walls in 1271, he was confronted by the enormity of what still remained. Hence, during the sixth week of his investment, the wily sultan gambled on a carrier pigeon that he sent over the walls with a message purportedly from the head of the Order of St John ordering the defenders to seek honourable surrender. The beleaguered castellan agreed, and Baibars upheld the pretence and let the garrison leave with honour.

AL-KERAK Kingdom of Jerusalem

Also known as Kerak or Karak, this castle was never fully held by a military order, though the Hospitallers were granted the lower bailey in 1152. It's worthy of inclusion here, however, courtesy of a story from Saladin's siege in 1183. During his bombardment, a crusader wedding was in full swing and, unperturbed by the attack, the bride's mother sent out some choice dishes to Saladin, who responded by asking whereabouts the wedding was taking place in order that he might direct his artillery elsewhere.



> "IN TRUTH, PEACE REIGNED IN THE EAST, THOUGH TENSIONS OFTEN SIMMERED. YET URBAN'S BID TO BOOST PAPAL POWER WOULD CHANGE ALL THAT"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HARRAN
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FAMAGUSTA
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HIMS
TORTOSA
6
LIMASSOL
7
TRIPOLI
BABYLOS
BEIRUT
DAMASCUS
SIDON
1148
TYRE
ACRE
8
CAESAREA
JERUSALEM
JAFFA
HEBRON
DARUM
AQABA
SELJUK INVASION OF THE COUNTY OF EDESSA (1144)
ROUTE OF THE SECOND CRUSADE (1147-1149)
MAJOR BATTLE
CHRISTIAN CASTLE
1 BYZANTINE EMPIRE CHRISTIAN STATE
2 SULTANATE OF RHUM ISLAMIC STATE
3 ARMENIAN CILICIA CHRISTIAN STATE
4 COUNTY OF EDESSA CRUSADER STATE
5 PRINCIPALITY OF ANTIOCH CRUSADER STATE
6 COUNTY OF TRIPOLI CRUSADER STATE
7 SELJUK TURKS ISLAMIC STATE
8 KINGDOM OF JERUSALEM CRUSADER STATE

COUNTY OF EDESSA

The first Latin settlement to come into existence in the Levant, Edessa straddled the Euphrates and was sandwiched between the Muslims and the Greeks. Its population was mostly Christian and its land comparatively fertile.

PRINCIPALITY OF ANTIOCH

Lying between Edessa and the coast was the Principality of Antioch, with its frontier edging towards Aleppo. Often in conflict with the Byzantine Empire as well as the Muslim world, it contained the fortresses of Jabala, Latakia and the romantically named Chastel Rouge.

KINGDOM OF JERUSALEM

The leaders of the First Crusade elected Godfrey of Bouillon to rule the kingdom that ran from Jerusalem through to Jaffa on the coast. In the years following, the kingdom ran as far north as Beirut, taking in the key ports of Tyre, Acre and Ascalon, as well as Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jericho and the fortress of Belvoir.

COUNTY OF TRIPOLI

Founded by the powerful crusader Raymond of St Gilles, the County of Tripoli boasted the important port from which it took its name, as well the fortresses of Tortosa, Chastel-Blanc and the mighty Krak des Chevaliers.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE HOSPITAL OF ST JOHN (KNIGHTS HOSPITALLER)

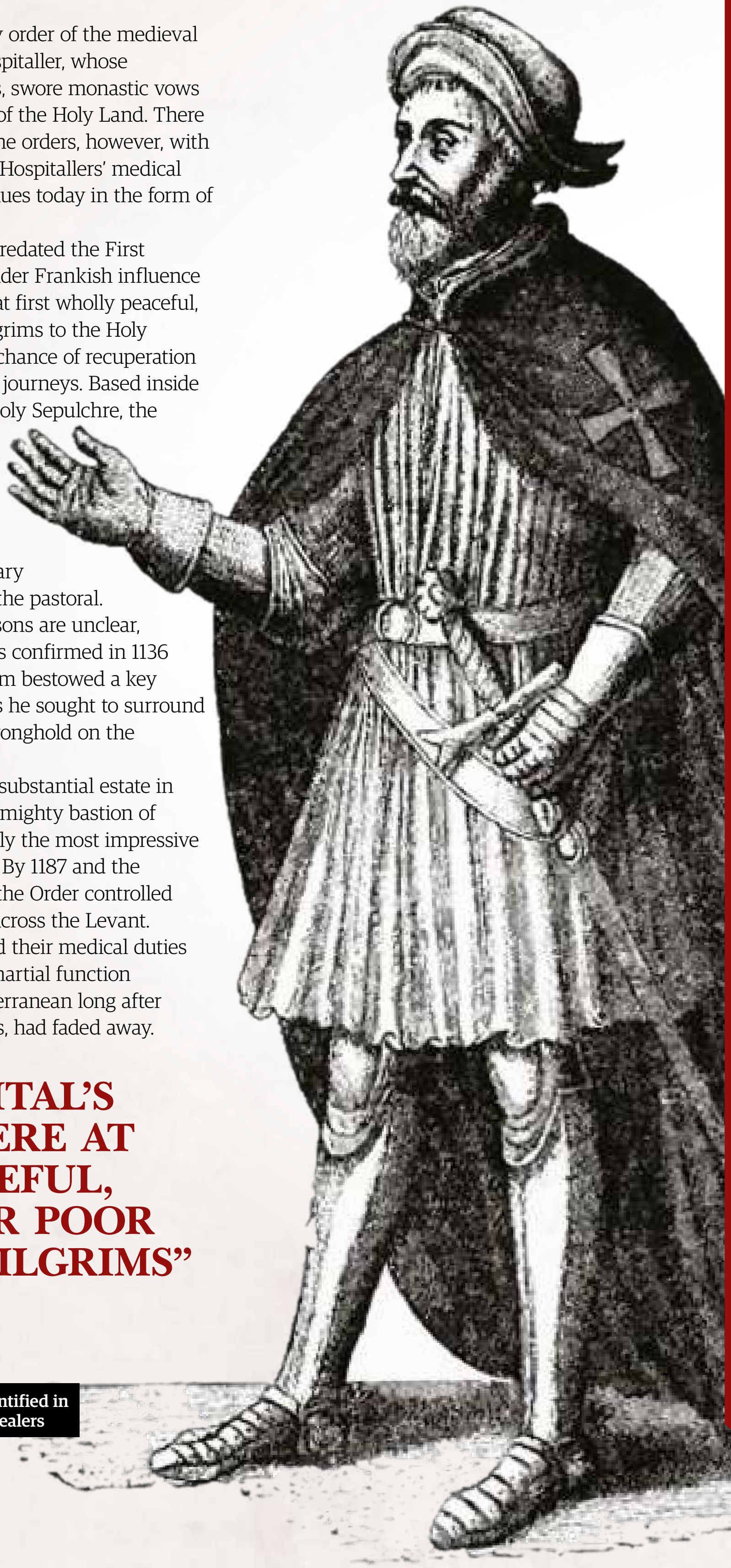
FOUNDED: 1099 **FOUNDER:** Fra' Gerard **HEADQUARTERS:** Initially Jerusalem; most famously Malta

The second leading military order of the medieval period was the Knights Hospitaller, whose members, like the Templars, swore monastic vows and fought for the defence of the Holy Land. There were differences between the orders, however, with the most notable being the Hospitallers' medical duties – a legacy that continues today in the form of St John's Ambulance.

The Hospital of St John predated the First Crusade, though it came under Frankish influence soon after. Its origins were at first wholly peaceful, caring for poor and sick pilgrims to the Holy Land by offering them the chance of recuperation before they continued their journeys. Based inside a building adjacent to the Holy Sepulchre, the hospital is said to have had provision for up to 2,000 sick of both sexes. Their impetus changed, however, during the course of the 12th century as military functions came to outstrip the pastoral. The precise timing and reasons are unclear, though military activity was confirmed in 1136 when King Fulk of Jerusalem bestowed a key fortress upon the knights as he sought to surround Ascalon, the last Muslim stronghold on the Palestinian coast.

By 1144, the order took a substantial estate in Tripoli, which included the mighty bastion of Krak des Chevaliers, arguably the most impressive fortress of the crusader era. By 1187 and the disastrous Battle of Hattin, the Order controlled more than 20 strongholds across the Levant. The Hospitallers maintained their medical duties alongside their increasing martial function and fought on in the Mediterranean long after Outremer, and the Templars, had faded away.

"THE HOSPITAL'S ORIGINS WERE AT FIRST PEACEFUL, CARING FOR POOR AND SICK PILGRIMS"

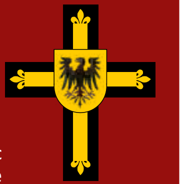


The Knights of St John are identified in their capacity as medics and healers

THE OTHER MILITARY ORDERS

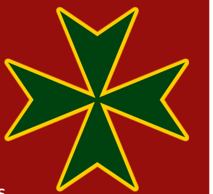
The Templars and Hospitallers were the most famous soldier-monks, but they were not alone. A host of military orders emerged in their wake...

TEUTONIC KNIGHTS



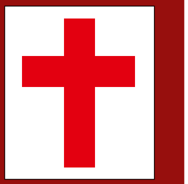
Certainly the third most-celebrated order, the Teutonic Knights were founded in 1198 along the same lines as its brethren, a legacy of the abortive German crusade of 1197. Initially installed at St Nicholas Gate at Acre, they flourished in the Baltic rather than Palestine, though as the military orders took an ever-increasing role in the defence of Outremer the Teutonic Knights played their part.

KNIGHTS OF ST LAZARUS



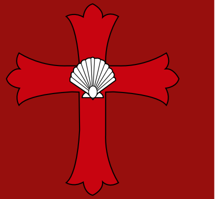
It is thought that the Hospitallers of St Lazarus, a group of leper knights first mentioned in 1142, was the third order to emerge in the Levant. The rule of the Temple insisted that any member who contracted leprosy should leave and join these brethren. In times of crisis, the 'unclean' knights may have born arms.

KNIGHTS OF OUR LADY OF MONTJOIE



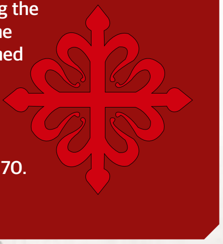
Montjoie was a castle outside Jerusalem, taking its name from pilgrims' joyous proclamations uttered upon seeing the Holy City in the distance. The Spanish Count Rodrigo founded this order, which followed the Cistercian rule and pledged to ransom captives as well as fight the 'infidels' of the Holy Land, but it struggled to attract recruits.

KNIGHTS OF ST THOMAS OF ACRE

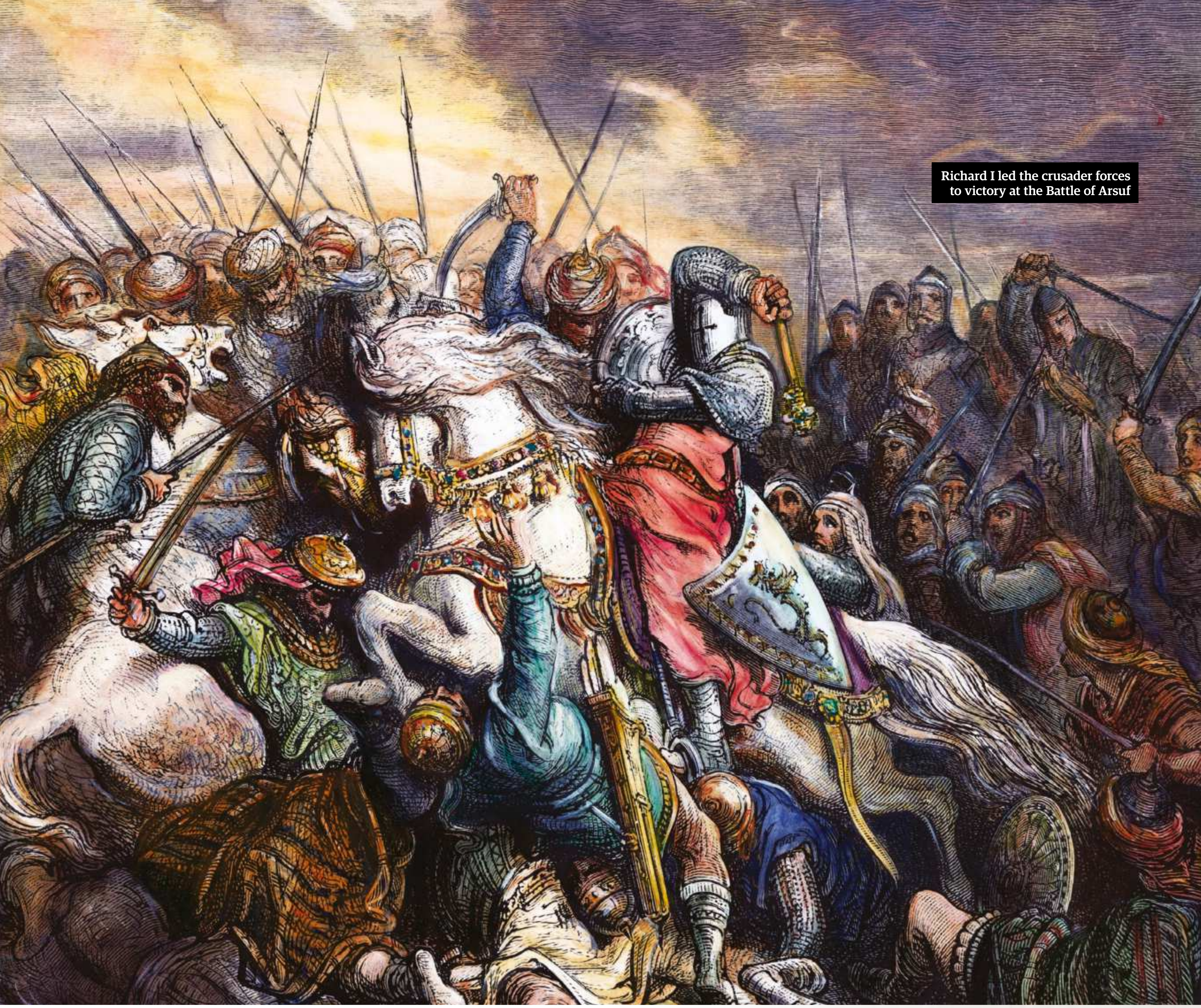


Founded in 1191 in Acre after the city had been seized by Richard the Lionheart's forces, this Catholic order only admitted Englishmen as members. The group was not militarised until the Fifth Crusade in 1217, but it would help to hold Acre for over a century.

THE KNIGHTS OF CALATRAVA



The initial success of the military orders in the East inspired similar zeal during the Reconquista in Spain, where the Knights of Calatrava were formed in Castille in 1158 to help drive the Moors back across the Mediterranean. Other orders followed, like the Knights of Santiago, founded in León in 1170.



Richard I led the crusader forces to victory at the Battle of Arsuf

MILITARY ORDERS AT WAR: THE BATTLE OF ARSUF, 1191

Such was the military orders' prowess on the field that the great conqueror Saladin, ordinarily a merciful man, ordered the execution of many Templars and Hospitallers in the wake of his crushing victory at Hattin so that they could not fight again. Indeed, Saladin's victory at Hattin in 1187 and his subsequent recapture of Jerusalem inspired the Third Crusade, which brought Richard I of England to Palestine, a great warrior who, like his enemy, quickly recognised the efficacy of the military orders.

During Richard's march south from victory at Acre in July 1191, for example, the Christian army was harassed persistently but the military orders played a vital role not only in repelling Turkish onslaughts - the Hospitallers in the van, the Templars at the rear - but also in collecting fodder and recovering the wounded.

They really proved their worth at Arsuf in September of that year, when Saladin, eager to avenge the slaughter at Acre, finally pounced. Richard marched for the safety of the fortress at Arsuf, drawing up his forces in 12 squadrons, which were then divided into five separate battle-lines for their final push. The lionhearted general recognised that group control and coherence would be instrumental.

With this in mind he ordered the Templars to take the van, with the Hospitallers holding the rear, figuring that their discipline would keep his more reckless troops in check. Richard packed his men into such a solid mass that one chronicler claimed that an apple, if tossed in their midst, would not hit the ground.

Saladin attacked, bludgeoning the Christian rear, and the Hospitallers were pushed to breaking point, prompting a lapse in discipline that, ironically, won the day. The Knights of St John charged their assailants, though they'd been given no orders to do so. The infantry lines parted and the Templars, then Richard himself, thundered into Saladin's troops like a "rolling wave" according to one author. Their impact was utterly devastating, causing the Turks to break and flee. The military orders had won yet another great victory.

THE DEMISE OF THE TEMPLARS

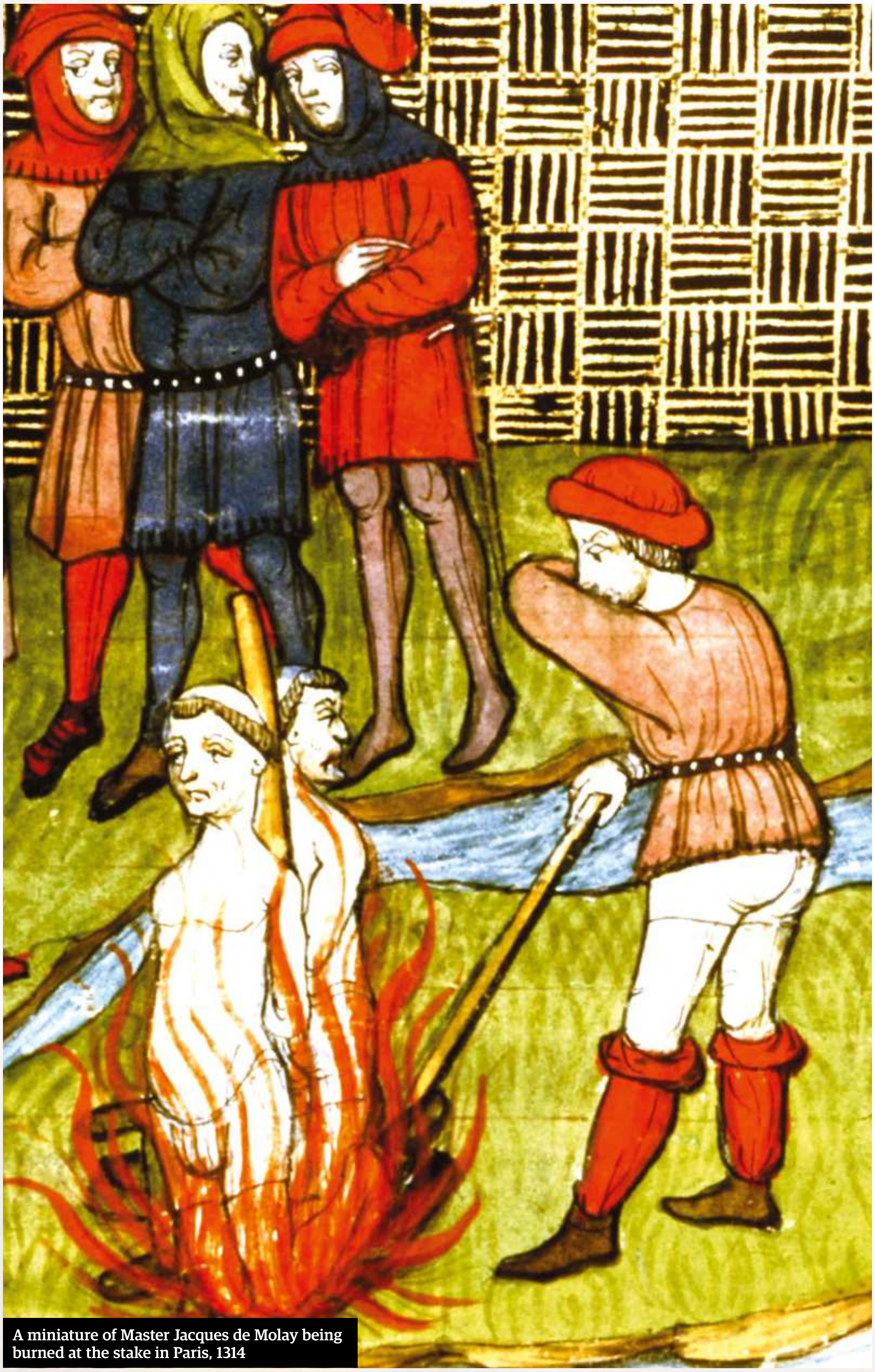
The 12th and 13th centuries saw the Templars become pivotal in the Christian world as both a bulwark against the Muslim tide in the East and as a financial powerhouse in the West. Yet in 1312 the order was dissolved and two years later its Grand Master was roasted alive…

"A detestable crime, an execrable evil, an abominable work." Such were the contents of King Philip IV's secret orders to his seneschals in September 1307 as he prepared the surprise arrest of the Knights Templar in France, their European stronghold. Among the accusations levelled at the knights were the sins of denying Christ, of engaging in homosexual practice and of worshipping idols. Pope Clement V protested, but when Master Jacques de Molay and others confessed, he ordered the Templars' arrest across Europe. Trials followed and in March 1312 the papacy announced the order's dissolution. Molay, who retracted his original confession, was burned at the stake in 1314.

During the course of the scandal many of the Templars who'd confessed argued that they had done so under torture - a lamentable method of prosecuting the innocent throughout history. In addition, when their treasures were seized there was no mention of the supposed idols that they were said to have worshipped, and though members had apostatised and left the Temple throughout its history, never before had such allegations come to light. It appears the reasons for the Templars fall came from without, not within. But why?

By this period the military orders had failed in their pledge to protect Outremer, which had gradually collapsed, and with the fall of Acre in 1291 critics had a target for their protestations. Many have also argued that Philip worried about a military state within his own country, but the Temple in France was hardly militaristic in character. Perhaps Philip, always struggling for money, coveted the knights' vast riches, and certainly the crown enjoyed short-term financial gain, but the pope - though often regarded as a puppet of the French king at the time - granted their treasures to the Hospitallers, and Philip did not press for further financial gain.

There had been discussions about merging the military orders, but the Templars protested and some believe that this angered Philip who, eager to forge a new crusade, hoped to lead the combined orders to war. Philip never did visit the Holy Land, even though the opportunity remained throughout his life. The fact remains that the king might have believed the accusations levelled against the Templars. Certainly, following his wife's death in 1305 he became increasingly concerned with religious matters and may have wanted to purge a perceived evil. No conclusion is definitive, and though the military orders continued to operate, the mightiest order of all had been destroyed.



A miniature of Master Jacques de Molay being burned at the stake in Paris, 1314

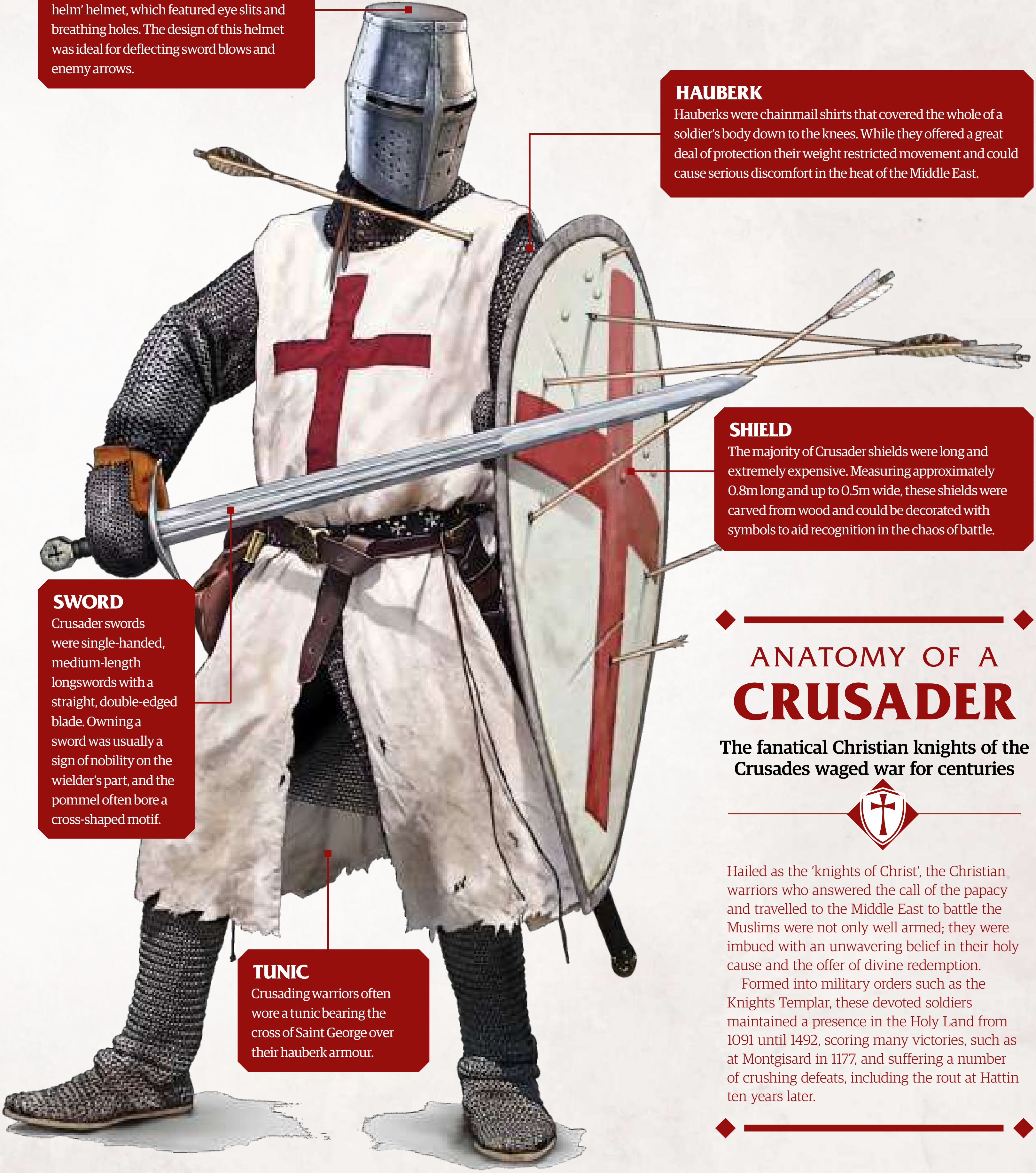
Alamy; Corbis; Freevectormaps.com; Thinkstock

ANATOMY OF A CRUSADER

The fanatical Christian knights of the Crusades waged war for centuries

Hailed as the 'knights of Christ', the Christian warriors who answered the call of the papacy and travelled to the Middle East to battle the Muslims were not only well armed; they were imbued with an unwavering belief in their holy cause and the offer of divine redemption.

Formed into military orders such as the Knights Templar, these devoted soldiers maintained a presence in the Holy Land from 1091 until 1492, scoring many victories, such as at Montgisard in 1177, and suffering a number of crushing defeats, including the rout at Hattin ten years later.



HELMET

Wealthier knights were able to afford a 'great helm' helmet, which featured eye slits and breathing holes. The design of this helmet was ideal for deflecting sword blows and enemy arrows.

HAUBERK

Hauberks were chainmail shirts that covered the whole of a soldier's body down to the knees. While they offered a great deal of protection their weight restricted movement and could cause serious discomfort in the heat of the Middle East.

SHIELD

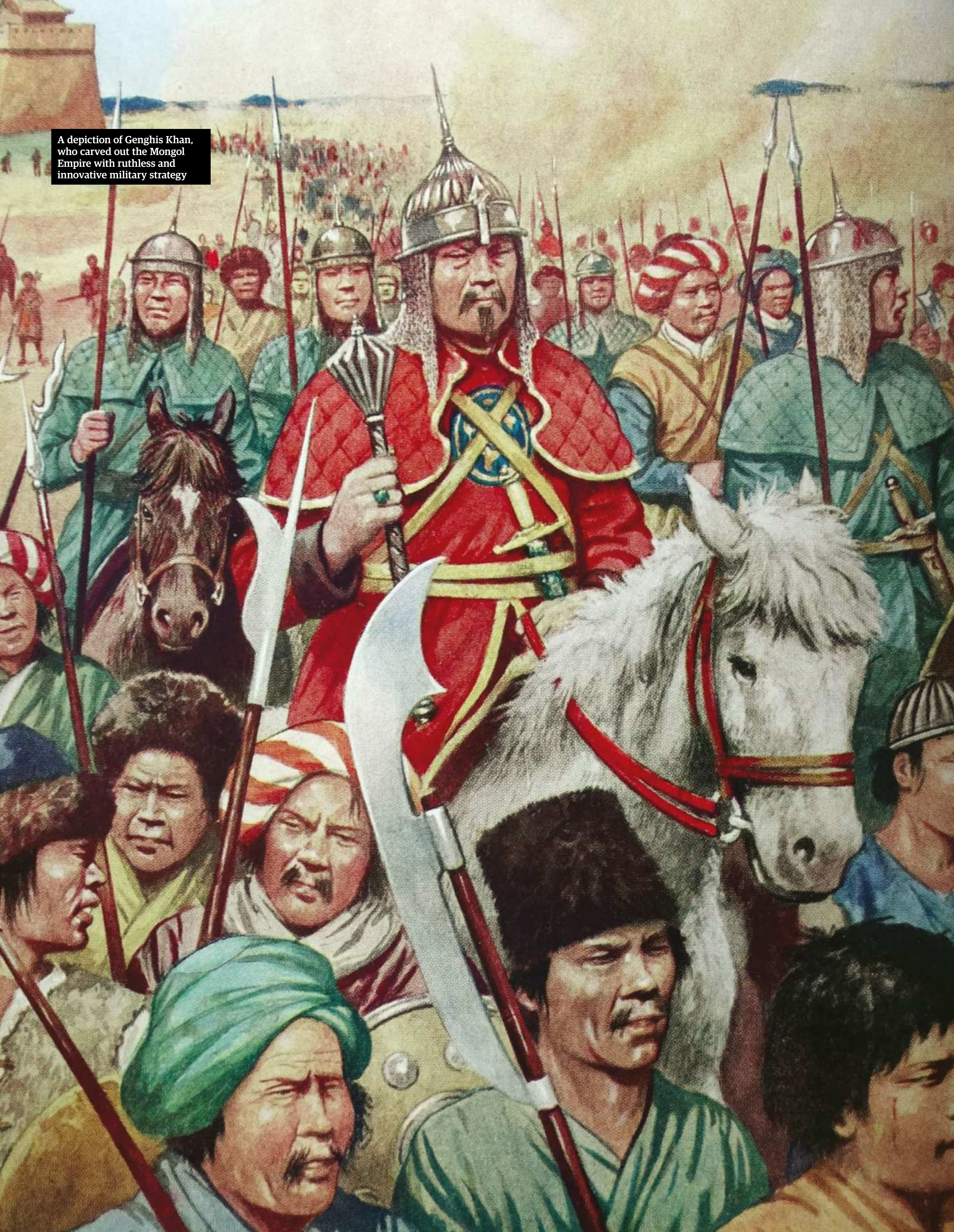
The majority of Crusader shields were long and extremely expensive. Measuring approximately 0.8m long and up to 0.5m wide, these shields were carved from wood and could be decorated with symbols to aid recognition in the chaos of battle.

SWORD

Crusader swords were single-handed, medium-length longswords with a straight, double-edged blade. Owning a sword was usually a sign of nobility on the wielder's part, and the pommel often bore a cross-shaped motif.

TUNIC

Crusading warriors often wore a tunic bearing the cross of Saint George over their hauberk armour.



A depiction of Genghis Khan, who carved out the Mongol Empire with ruthless and innovative military strategy

MILITARY MIGHT OF THE MONGOLS

FEARED AS DEVILS OR THE DESCENDANTS OF MYTHICAL GIANTS, THE MONGOLS' STRENGTH WAS ACTUALLY BASED ON FAMILIAR PRINCIPLES OF MILITARY SUCCESS

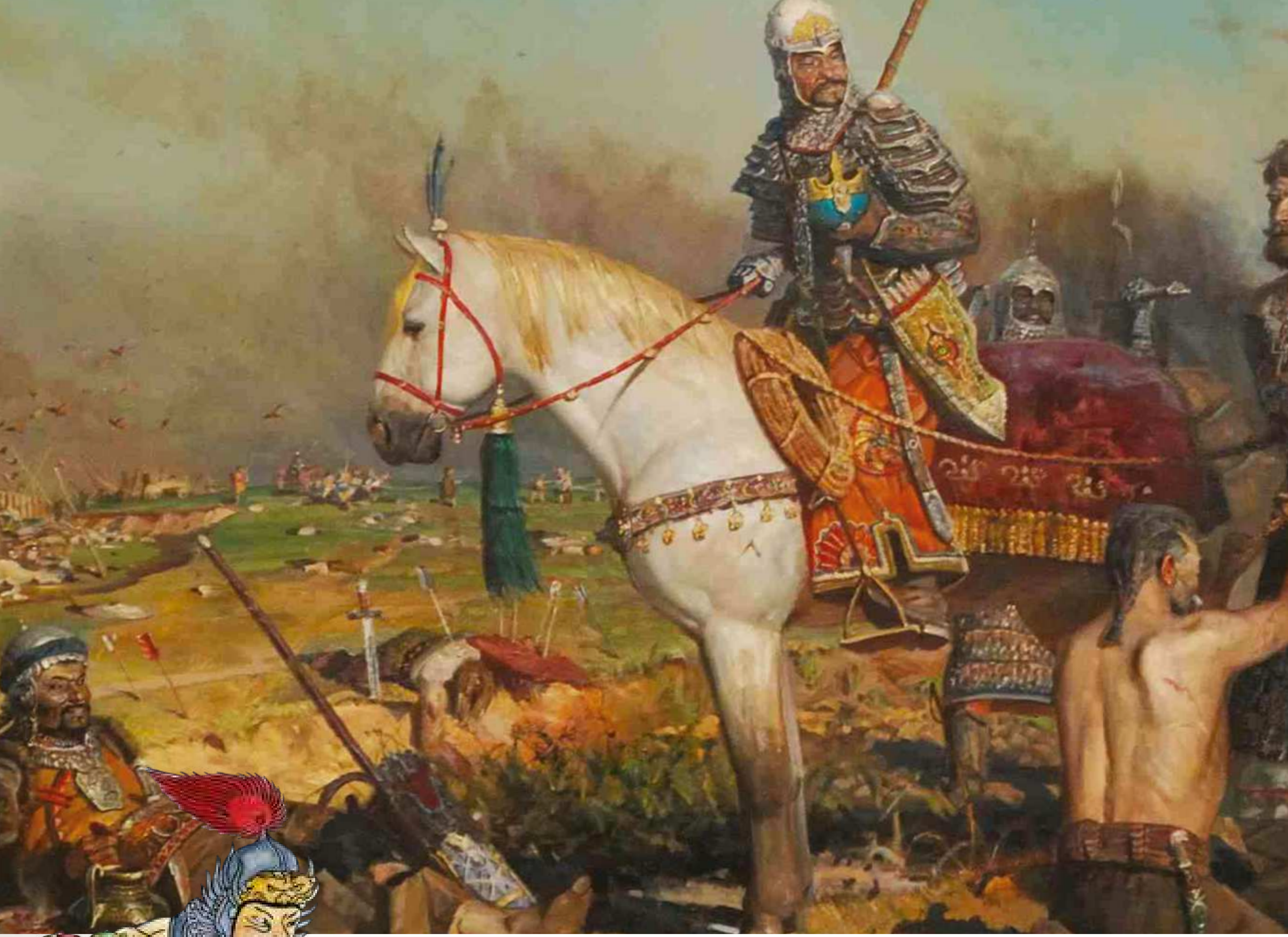
At their height, the Mongols controlled an empire that dwarfed that of the Romans, yet before erupting from the eastern steppes in the 13th century, they were just one of many nomadic tribes in the region, and their main concern was finding adequate grazing for their many sheep, goats and horses.

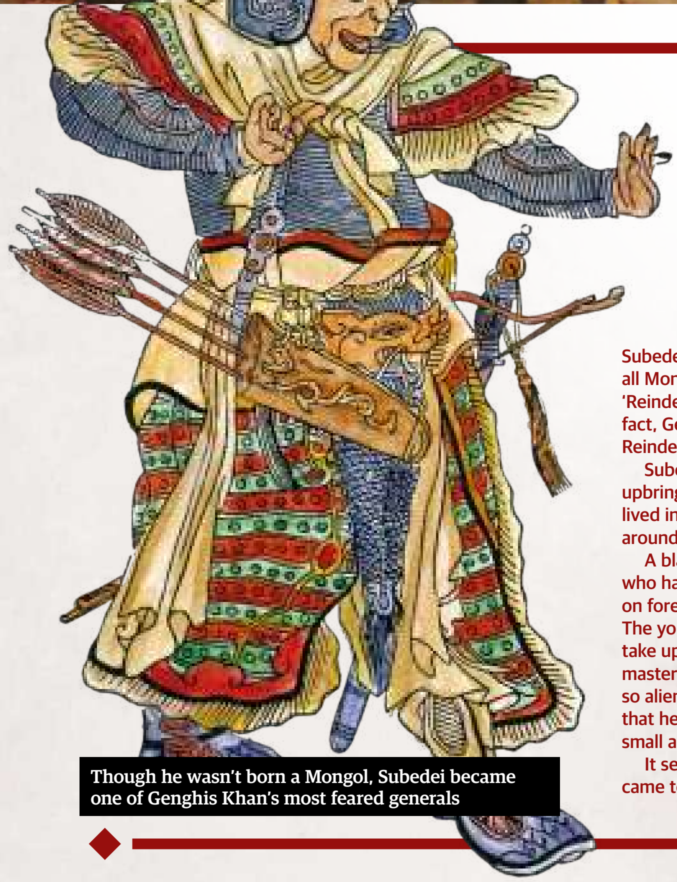
How these hardy but independent tribesmen came to take on the might of China, Japan and even Europe is one of the greatest stories in military history. It is a story that has slipped into cliché and caricature because, unusually, it was not the victors who wrote the history. Instead, it was the shocked and traumatised nations that fell under the onslaught that recorded the events, and the Medieval European imagination, starved of hard data about the wider world, was all too ready to dream up terrifying stories of dog-headed men and mounted demons.

The intentions of these early chroniclers were often to belittle the Mongols' staggering achievements. Their successes were attributed to overwhelming numbers, their strategic withdrawals recast as defeats, and they were ultimately written off as unspeakably cruel, inhuman barbarians.

Eyewitnesses were able to offer more substantiated and down-to-earth assessments of the Mongols. The Persian historian Ala-ad-Din Ata-Malik Juvaini, who spent years living with the Mongols, remarked of their army, "It is an army after the fashion of a peasantry… It is also a peasantry in the guise of an army."

The truth is that the Mongols had built one of the most formidable war machines the world has ever seen, and this could not have been done by mindless barbarians. The secrets to their success lay not in savagery but in the same qualities that underpin any successful military force: training, weapons, tactics, strategy, mobility and discipline.





Though he wasn't born a Mongol, Subedei became one of Genghis Khan's most feared generals

WRATH OF THE KHANS

THE GREATEST GENERAL IN THE HISTORY OF THE MONGOL EMPIRE, SUBEDEI BAGHATUR (SUBEDEI THE VALIANT), WASN'T EVEN A MONGOL

Subedei overcame humble origins to become the greatest of all Mongol generals. The son of a blacksmith and one of the 'Reindeer People', he was not technically a Mongol at all. In fact, Genghis Khan launched a military operation to bring the Reindeer People under his control.

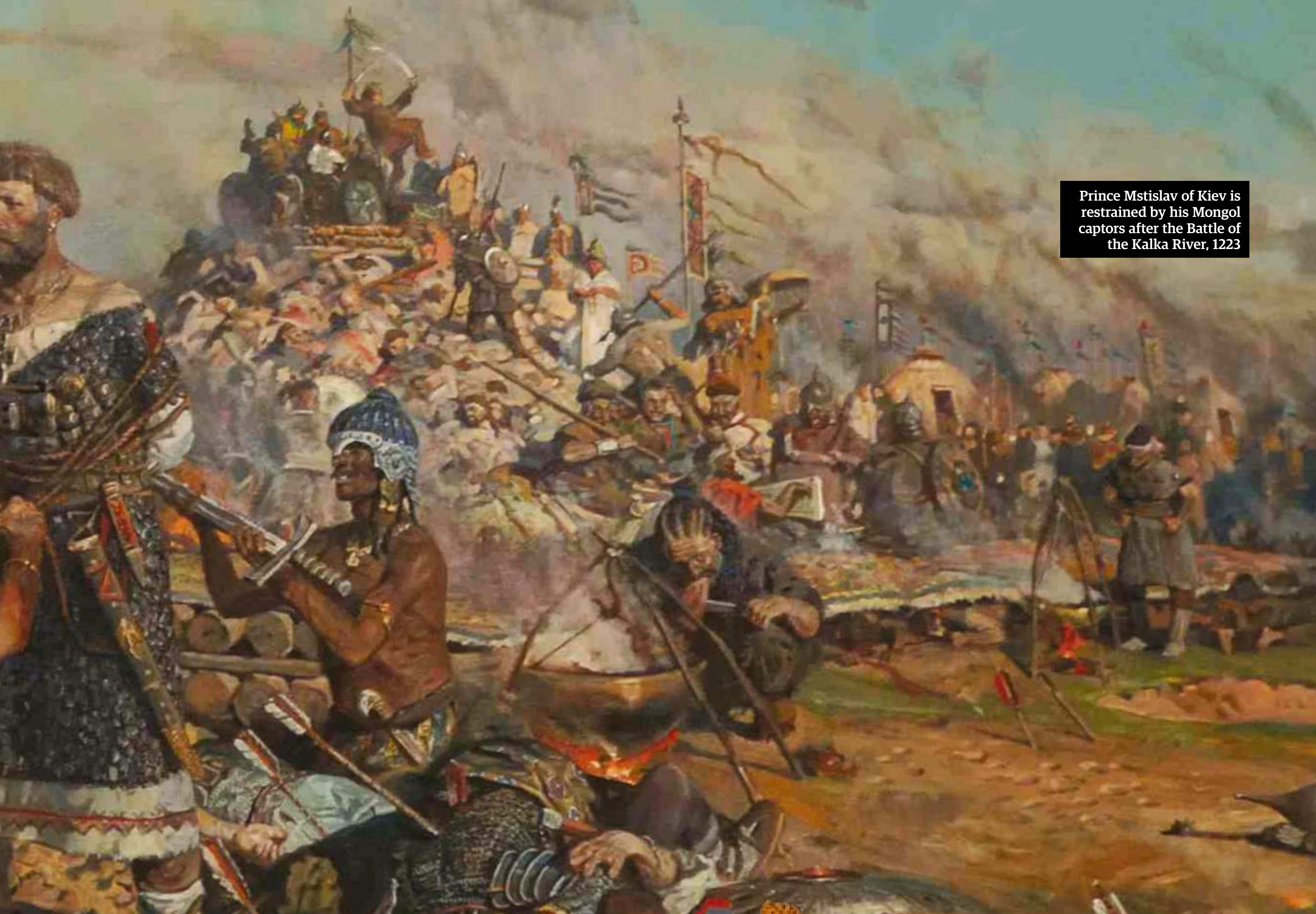
Subedei therefore did not have the traditional Mongol upbringing. His people rode reindeer rather than horses and lived in permanent villages rather than moving their herds around the vast steppes.

A blacksmith would have been valued by the Mongols, who had developed no technology of their own and so relied on foreign skills and materials to provide them with weapons. The young Subedei, however, had shown no inclination to take up his father's trade. Quite how he developed such a mastery of warfare, particularly on the steppe lands that were so alien to his native land, is impossible to know. It is likely that he had never even sat on a horse when he joined the small army of Temujin (Genghis Khan's original name).

It seems likely that Subedei was simply a natural when it came to tactical and strategic thinking, and he had a gift for employing that thinking on a vast scale. Allied with this was a willingness to absorb technology and ideas from others. This was most notable in his use of siege weaponry and his willingness to employ it on the battlefield (it was Subedei's idea to implement the rolling barrage that cleared the bridge over the Sajo).

As well as natural ability, however, Subedei was the beneficiary of a remarkable form of military training. As a young man he acted as 'doorkeeper of the tent' for Temujin as he built his power base in the last decade of the 12th century. Thanks to this privileged position, he would have been able to listen in on countless councils of war, learning how generals thought and planned and no doubt making his own mind up about what was and wasn't effective.

Subedei's crowning glory was his majestic plan to invade Eastern Europe, splitting the Mongol army across a vast front while continuing to maintain effective communications between the different corps. It was warfare on a scale the Europeans had never seen before, and they were completely unable to offer an effective response.



Prince Mstislav of Kiev is restrained by his Mongol captors after the Battle of the Kalka River, 1223

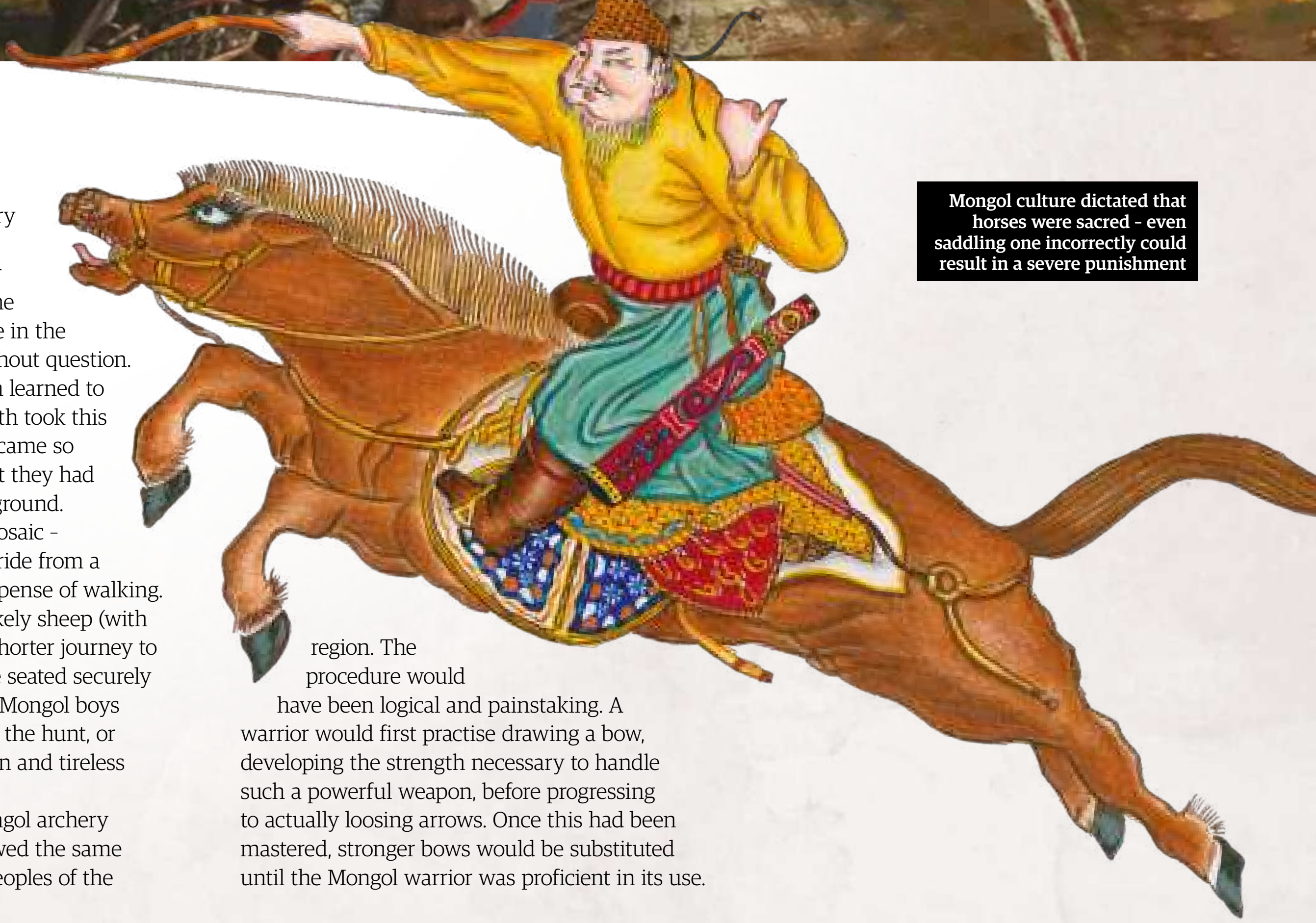
SKILLS

The life of a Mongol tribesman was an extended form of military training. In fact, the Mongolian language has no native word for 'soldier' - almost all men over the age of 15 were expected to serve in the armed forces if called upon, without question.

Legend tells that Mongol men learned to ride before they could walk. Myth took this further, suggesting that they became so used to riding on horseback that they had great difficulty walking on the ground.

The truth was rather more prosaic - children were indeed taught to ride from a very early age, but not at the expense of walking. Their first mounts were most likely sheep (with the obvious benefit of a much shorter journey to the ground if they fell off). Once seated securely on a horse, however, the young Mongol boys would start to learn the skills of the hunt, or nerge, becoming expert bowmen and tireless riders ready for the wars ahead.

Little is known of formal Mongol archery training, but it most likely followed the same principles employed by other peoples of the region. The procedure would have been logical and painstaking. A warrior would first practise drawing a bow, developing the strength necessary to handle such a powerful weapon, before progressing to actually loosing arrows. Once this had been mastered, stronger bows would be substituted until the Mongol warrior was proficient in its use.



Mongol culture dictated that horses were sacred - even saddling one incorrectly could result in a severe punishment

STRATEGY

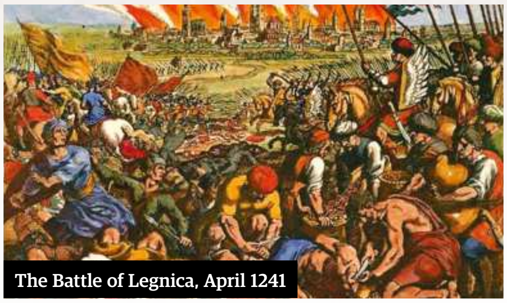
There was little strategy in early Mongolian expeditions. Seeing wealthy neighbours as little more than supply stations to be plundered at will, the Mongols had no interest in actually conquering another nation.

This changed, for unknown reasons, during a raid into China in 1211, when Jin forces fielded a large army to resist the Mongols' predations. Genghis Khan, faced with this 70,000-strong army, could have simply withdrawn into his homelands as countless raiding expeditions before had done, but on this occasion he chose battle and annihilated the Jin force.

Any thoughts of complete conquest were still hampered by the Mongols' inability to cope with large, fortified cities, but this gradually changed as expertise and equipment was absorbed from Jin territory. Eventually, the Mongols developed excellent siege tactics, which in turn allowed them to take on larger strategic goals.

During the campaign against Hungary, which started in 1241, the Mongols were able to split their army across a front of more than 1,000 kilometres while retaining cohesion and co-operation. The dispersal of force (including a diversionary thrust into Poland) allowed the Mongols to keep potential reinforcements from coming to the aid of the primary target.

Such large-scale, co-ordinated movements required high levels of organisation, and this was where Mongol training and discipline came into play. The army was split into units of ten, 100, 1,000 and 10,000, and a sophisticated and well-drilled system of flags, torches and messengers would ensure that communication between the units was continuous.


The Battle of Legnica, April 1241

This was perhaps the biggest advantage enjoyed by the Mongols during their invasion of Europe. European military organisation was rudimentary at best, with the key element, the mounted knights, more adept at individualistic skills. There was no command and control system to bring a force together as a unified whole, and this made them extremely vulnerable to the tactics employed by the Mongols. The situation was worsened by the nature of the European armies that faced the Mongols, riven as they often were by personal feuds and political divisions.

> **"THE MONGOLS WERE ABLE TO SPLIT THEIR ARMY ACROSS A FRONT OF MORE THAN 1,000 KILOMETRES"**

WEAPONS

The Mongols' most famed weapon was the bow, but their arsenal was varied and expanded steadily during their ascendancy. Just as the Mongols were willing to take on foreign knowledge and expertise (as in the case of siegecraft) they were also happy to adopt foreign weaponry.

Not only did they take on weapons such as catapults from China and other artillery from Persia, they were able to adapt them to their needs. Combining elements of both Chinese and Persian designs, the Mongols developed a catapult with a range of 350 metres. Explosives, naphtha and rocks would all be used as ammunition, and at the Sajo River in Hungary in 1241, the Mongols were able to employ a rolling barrage of artillery fire to enable them to cross a narrow bridge to get at the main army of King Bela.

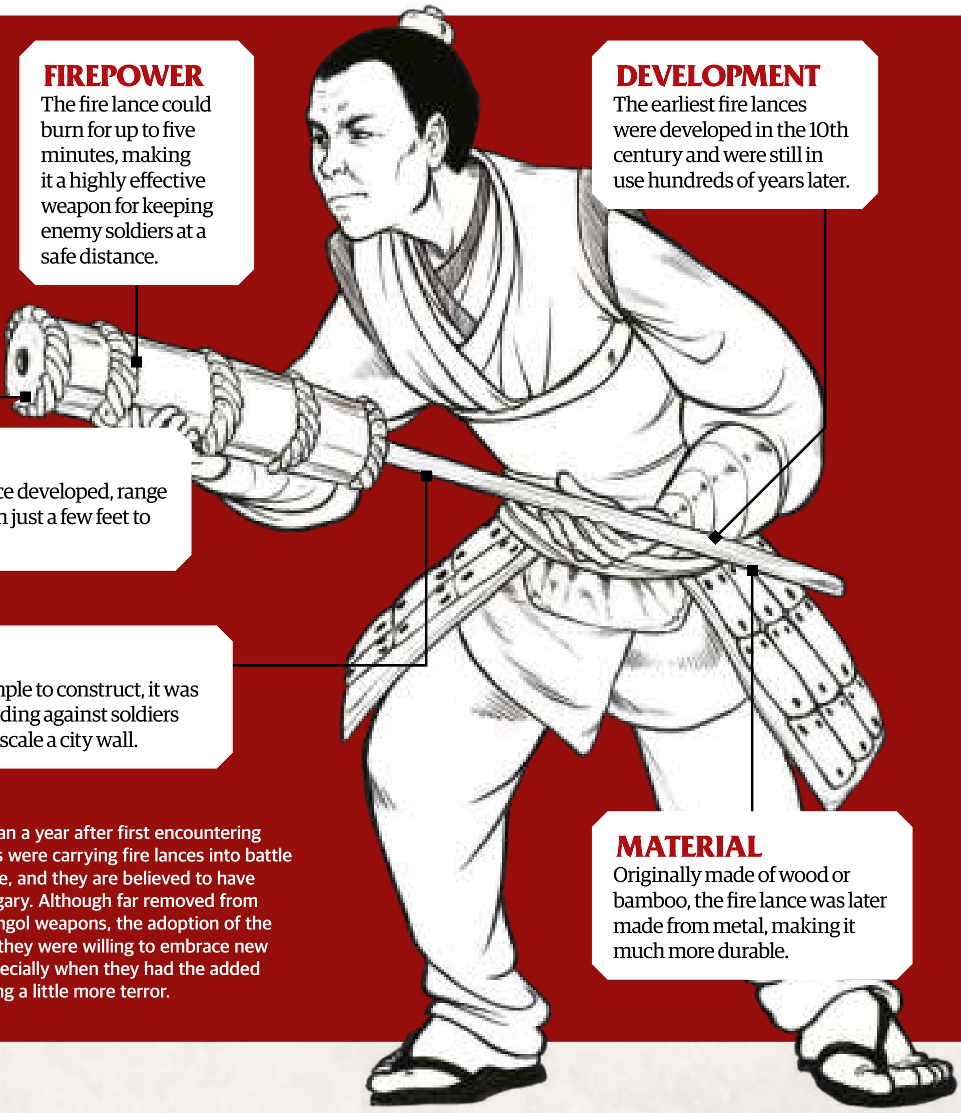
FIRE LANCE

The fire lance, the precursor of the gun, was a perfect example of the Mongols' willingness to adopt foreign technology. At the Siege of Kaifeng in 1232, the city had been terrified by this strange weapon, which spouted fire up to nine metres from the end of a spear. Invented by the Chinese, it was originally a form of flamethrower, able to keep an enemy at a distance, but it also had a significant psychological impact upon enemy soldiers, especially those who had never seen one before.

Initially, it was little more than a Roman candle-style firework constructed of bamboo or even paper and attached to a spear (once the fire had burnt out, the lance could be quickly converted back into a regular spear or pike). As it developed, however, the principle elements of what would later become firearms appeared, including the replacement of the bamboo barrel with one made of metal, which could withstand the use of more powerful gunpowder.

The lance was also able to be stuffed with pieces of stone or scraps of metal, which could then be hurled from the end at the enemy like primitive bullets. With the realisation that larger projectiles – which fit snugly into the barrel of the fire lance – would enable more of the explosive power of the gunpowder to hurl them forth, a crude firearm was born.

By 1233, less than a year after first encountering them, the Mongols were carrying fire lances into battle against the Chinese, and they are believed to have used them in Hungary. Although far removed from the traditional Mongol weapons, the adoption of the fire lance showed they were willing to embrace new technologies – especially when they had the added benefit of spreading a little more terror.



FIREPOWER

The fire lance could burn for up to five minutes, making it a highly effective weapon for keeping enemy soldiers at a safe distance.

DEVELOPMENT

The earliest fire lances were developed in the 10th century and were still in use hundreds of years later.

RANGE

As the fire lance developed, range improved from just a few feet to 9m or more.

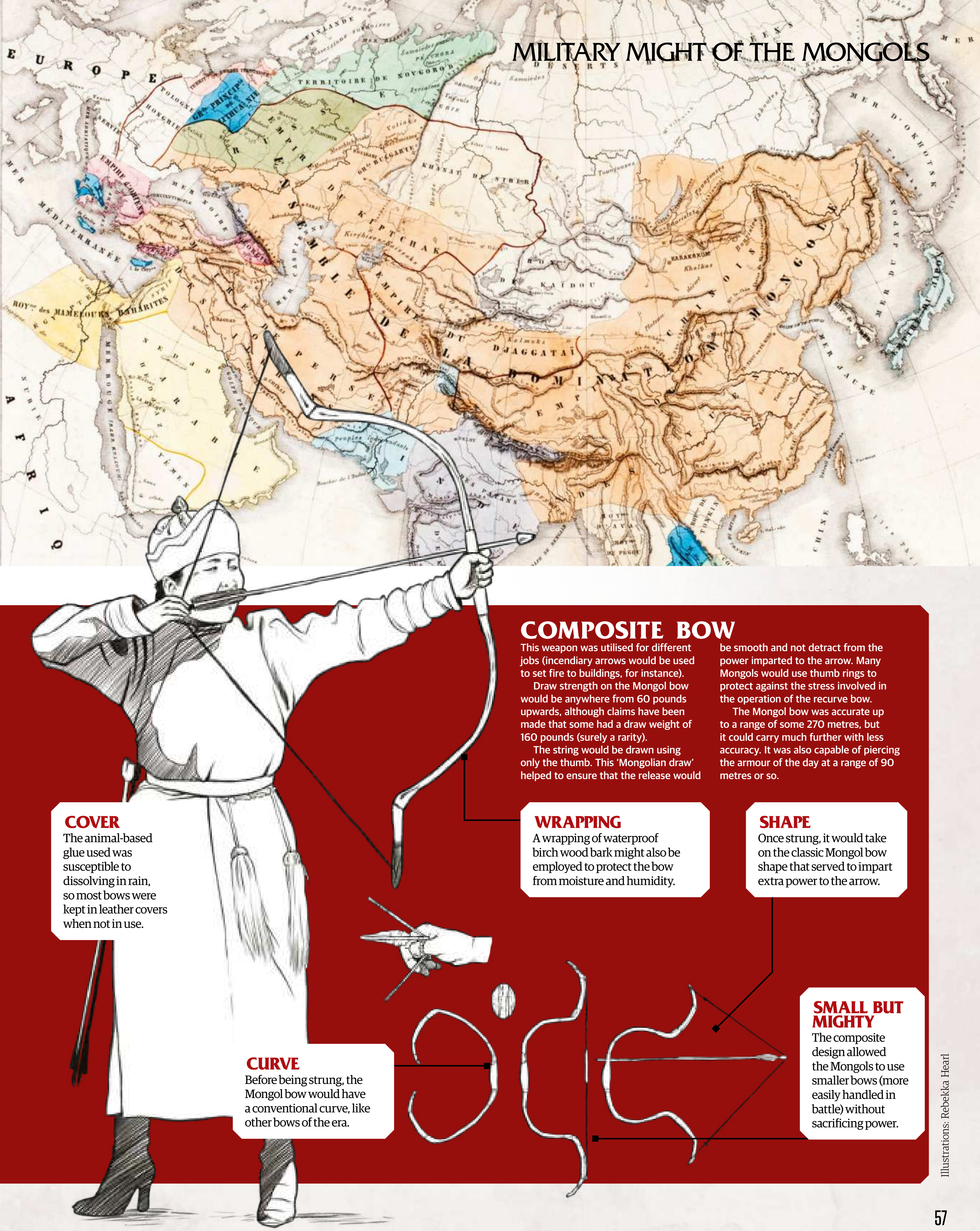
USES

Cheap and simple to construct, it was ideal for defending against soldiers attempting to scale a city wall.

MATERIAL

Originally made of wood or bamboo, the fire lance was later made from metal, making it much more durable.

MILITARY MIGHT OF THE MONGOLS


EUROPE
TERRITOIRE DE NOVGOROD
MER MÉDITERRANÉE
ROY^me des MAMELOUKS BAHARITES
MER CASPIENNE
KIPTCHAK
KARAKORUM
Khalkas
KAÏDOU
DJAGGATAÏ
MER ROUGE
AFRIQ
MER D'OKHOTSK
CHINE

COMPOSITE BOW

This weapon was utilised for different jobs (incendiary arrows would be used to set fire to buildings, for instance).

Draw strength on the Mongol bow would be anywhere from 60 pounds upwards, although claims have been made that some had a draw weight of 160 pounds (surely a rarity).

The string would be drawn using only the thumb. This 'Mongolian draw' helped to ensure that the release would be smooth and not detract from the power imparted to the arrow. Many Mongols would use thumb rings to protect against the stress involved in the operation of the recurve bow.

The Mongol bow was accurate up to a range of some 270 metres, but it could carry much further with less accuracy. It was also capable of piercing the armour of the day at a range of 90 metres or so.

COVER

The animal-based glue used was susceptible to dissolving in rain, so most bows were kept in leather covers when not in use.

WRAPPING

A wrapping of waterproof birch wood bark might also be employed to protect the bow from moisture and humidity.

SHAPE

Once strung, it would take on the classic Mongol bow shape that served to impart extra power to the arrow.

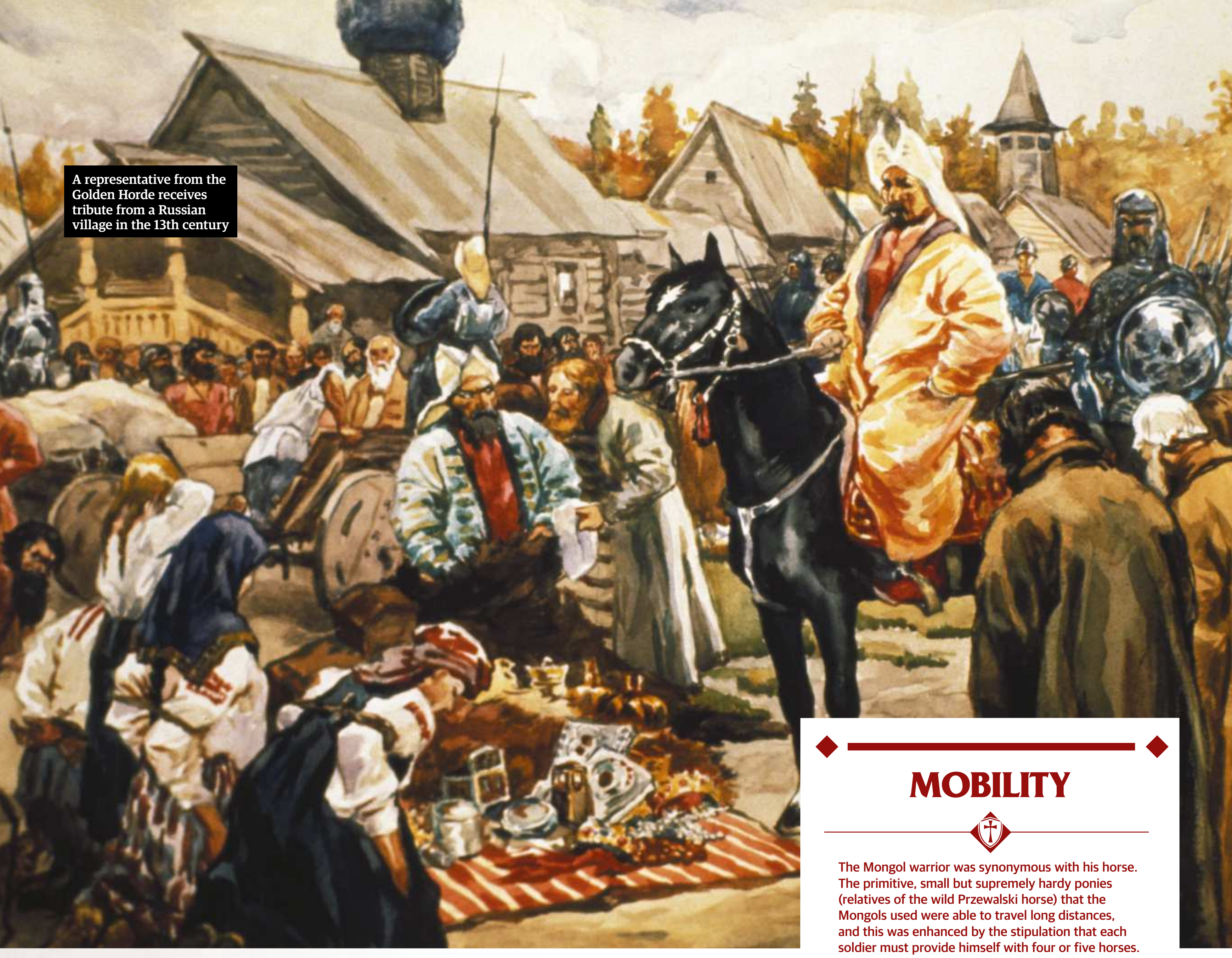
CURVE

Before being strung, the Mongol bow would have a conventional curve, like other bows of the era.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

The composite design allowed the Mongols to use smaller bows (more easily handled in battle) without sacrificing power.

Illustrations: Rebekka Hearl



A representative from the Golden Horde receives tribute from a Russian village in the 13th century

DISCIPLINE

The skills, training and weaponry of the Mongols would have counted for little were it not for their remarkable discipline. This has often been considered the result of a system of draconian punishments, which certainly played its part. The price for failure in the Mongol army could be high.

Genghis Khan had set the standard when he stated simply that, "If you are obedient to my mandates, it behoveth that, if I should command the sons to slay the father, you should all obey."

Punishment for disobedience could include flogging or even death for particularly serious offences. The Mongols were especially serious about preventing looting before a battle had been won, and any man caught in the act would be summarily executed. This was not out of any distaste for looting itself, rather it was an attempt to keep the army focused on its goal of winning the battle. There would be ample time for looting later.

Discipline was even meted out to entire units. If a group of men from an arban (ten soldiers) fled from a battle, they all faced execution. Although severe, this sort of code helped to ensure units acted together, key to success on the battlefield.

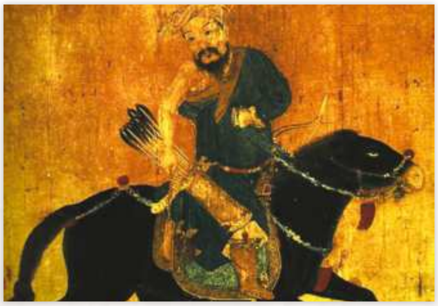
> "THE MONGOLS WERE ESPECIALLY SERIOUS ABOUT PREVENTING LOOTING BEFORE A BATTLE HAD BEEN WON, AND ANY MAN CAUGHT IN THE ACT WOULD BE EXECUTED"

MOBILITY

The Mongol warrior was synonymous with his horse. The primitive, small but supremely hardy ponies (relatives of the wild Przewalski horse) that the Mongols used were able to travel long distances, and this was enhanced by the stipulation that each soldier must provide himself with four or five horses.

A Mongol warrior was able to change mounts at a gallop, and the swiftness of their armies (reports commonly told of marches covering 100 kilometres in a single day) completely befuddled their European opponents, who believed they must have been facing armies of five or six times their actual number.

Mobility of a different sort was maintained by the light armour worn by the Mongol light cavalrymen. The silk undershirt (the Mongols were unable to produce their own silk, so they traded for it or simply looted it from the Chinese) was reckoned to offer some protection against arrow wounds, making the barbs easier to withdraw. The undershirt also maintained flexibility, allowing the Mongol warrior to perform the 'Parthian shot', in which he would gallop full tilt away from an enemy, while turning back in his saddle to fire an arrow.



TACTICS OF TERROR

Instilling fear in the enemy was not merely the by-product of Mongol tactics – it was a keystone of their entire strategy

Psychological warfare was a key tactic employed by the Mongols. It is easy to characterise their treatment of captured civilians and enemy soldiers as mere barbarity (and it was undeniably brutal), but there was actually a definite purpose behind it.

By creating a terrifying image of themselves, the Mongols made it more likely that any city they approached might surrender without putting up resistance. It also made it more likely that an area would remain submissive after Mongol forces had left – this was hugely important, as the invading force did not have enough men to leave garrisons.

For this reason, civilians in a captured city that had offered resistance would be systematically slaughtered or taken into slavery. A small proportion of the population would be allowed to go free, however, in order to spread the word of the ferocity of the Mongols and the futility of resistance. When the city of Bukhara was taken during the Mongol conquest of Khwarezm, several thousand civilians were freed, but only after witnessing the execution of 30,000 of their fellow citizens.

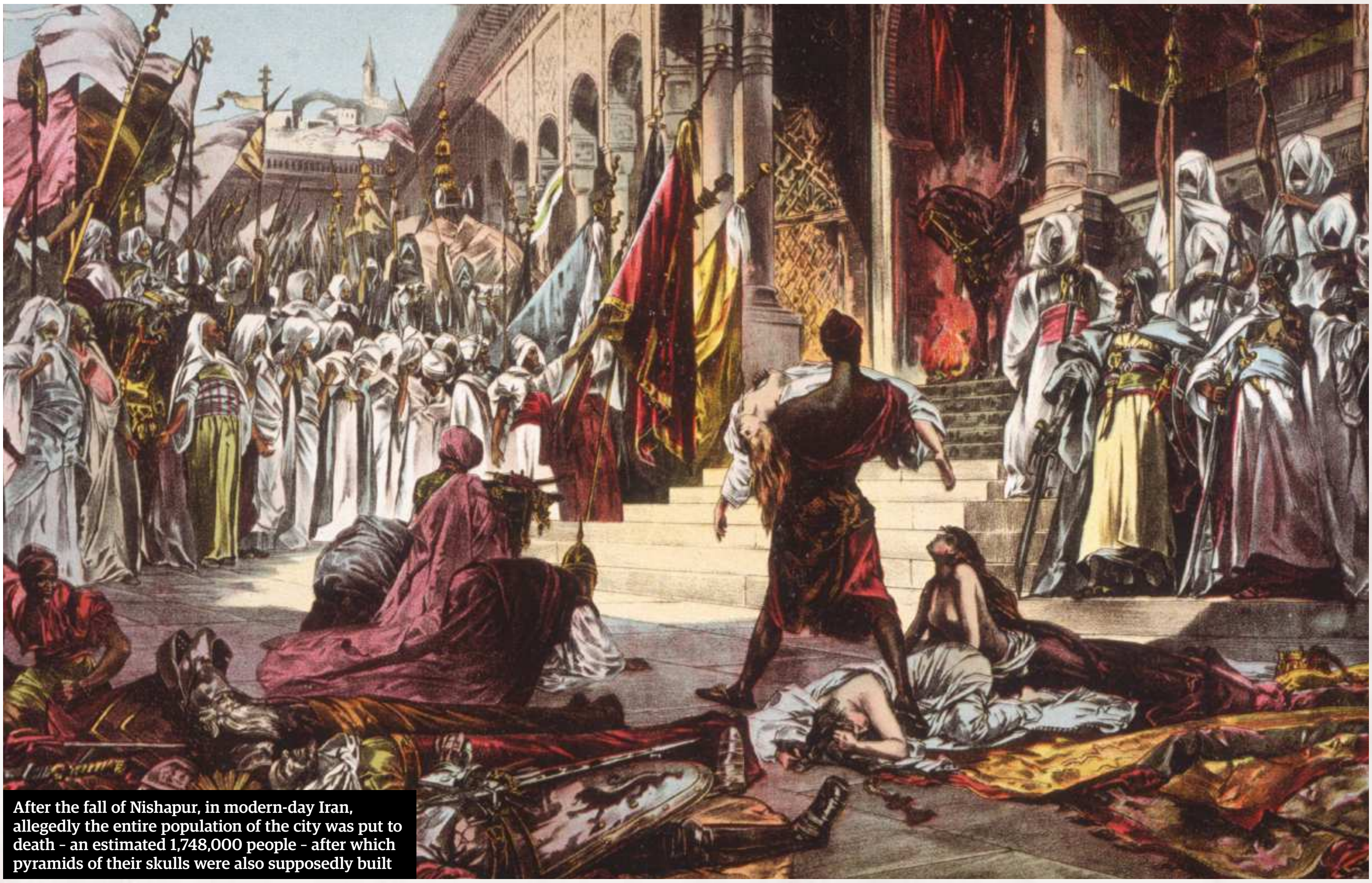
In battle, the Mongols would sometimes make use of a tactic known as kharash, in which prisoners would be herded before the main army as they advanced into battle. More than a mere exercise in psychological warfare, the prisoners would act as a human shield, taking the brunt of the enemy's defensive fire. The use of explosives and burning tar in artillery barrages was also as much intended to spread fear and chaos in enemy ranks as it was to do any genuine damage.

Because of the fearsome image the Mongols carefully crafted, many cities and even whole tribes submitted without resistance. The Mongols would always accept this gladly – it was far easier than having to conquer a foe, and treating those who submitted with the same harshness as those who resisted would undermine the effects of their psychological warfare campaign.

Even so, the Mongols' terror tactics sometimes worked against them, especially in Europe, where their already terrifying reputation was enhanced with all manner of fanciful embellishments. The Mongols were even professed by some to be the descendants of Gog and Magog, a pair of man-eating giants who had terrorised the world in ancient times.

Facing up to such inhuman opposition convinced many that no mercy could be expected from the Mongols, even if instant submission was offered, resulting in some ferocious fights to the death.

> **“CIVILIANS IN A CAPTURED CITY THAT HAD OFFERED RESISTANCE WOULD BE SYSTEMATICALLY SLAUGHTERED OR TAKEN INTO SLAVERY”**

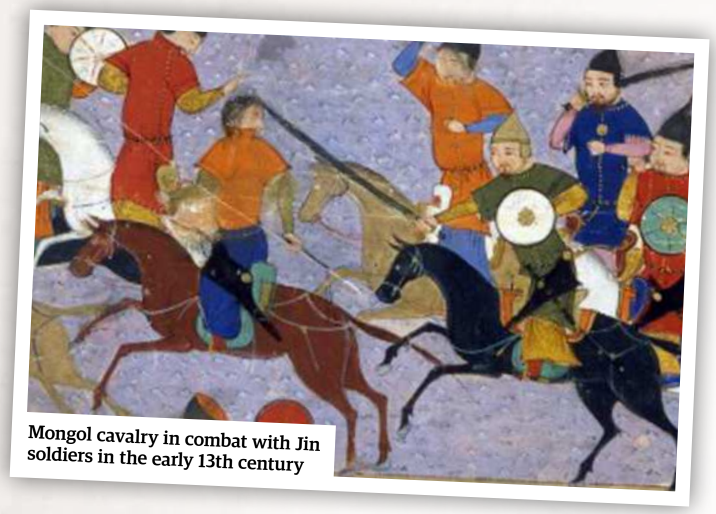


After the fall of Nishapur, in modern-day Iran, allegedly the entire population of the city was put to death – an estimated 1,748,000 people – after which pyramids of their skulls were also supposedly built

Images: Getty; Textures.com; Thinkstock; TopFoto

SIX MONGOL SACKINGS

Written by Jack Griffiths



Mongol cavalry in combat with Jin soldiers in the early 13th century

SAMARKAND

1220

Death toll: Approx. 100,000

The sacking of Samarkand was a key moment in one of Genghis Khan's first major conquests and was a signal of the warlord's intent. The city was an important trade hub for the Khwarezmid Empire and its destruction would be an economic hammer blow. Samarkand was strongly defended, so the attackers had to combine skill with tenacity. Covered by projectiles launched from trebuchets and siege bows, the infantry advanced using prisoners from past skirmishes as shields. The city's garrison fought stoutly, even attempting a counter-attack on the third day of the siege. This bold move was to be their undoing, as the Mongols defeated the defenders in hand-to-hand-combat, luring them in with a faked retreat. After five days many had surrendered, but 2,000 soldiers held out in the citadel. This rearguard bravery angered Genghis Khan, who renounced the earlier terms of surrender and executed every last man.

MERV

1221

Death toll: 70,000

Barely a year after he had laid waste to Samarkand, Genghis Khan was on the march again. There had been no letup in the Mongol expansion, which had now spread into Russia. Merv was the capital of the Seljuk Sultanate and one of the largest cities in the world in the 13th century. It was also one of the most impressive, with canals, markets and gardens alongside libraries and bathhouses. Genghis Khan cared little for this splendour, and in preparation for an assault he destroyed a nearby dam, thereby cutting off the city's water supply. Merv's garrison fought bravely against the Mongols over six days but eventually laid down their arms after they were promised they would be spared. Genghis Khan, true to form, went back on his word and ordered the massacre of all the inhabitants while he watched from atop a golden throne. The once great city became a ghost town and never recovered.

KAIFENG

1229

Death toll: Unknown

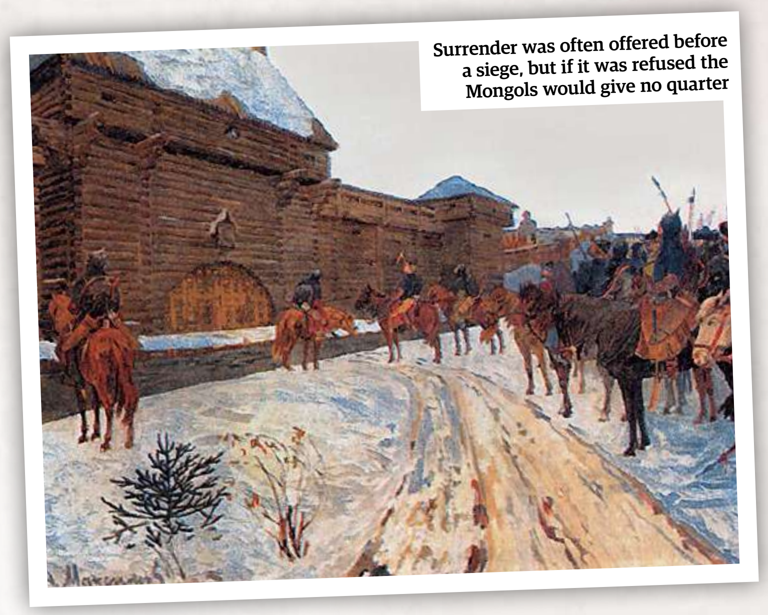
The Jin Dynasty had long been a rival of the Mongol Empire and war had raged for more than two decades by the time of the sacking of Kaifeng. The capital's defeat would be a deathblow for the dynasty. The attackers were led by a new Khan in Ogödei, who had forged a temporary alliance with the Song - the Jins' rivals. The siege began slowly, with the defenders using fire and gunpowder bombs that exploded with clusters of shrapnel. The Mongols were aided by the arrival of 20,000 Song reinforcements, and even though the assault never broke the gates, starvation and disease began to take their toll on the city. Forced to eat their own horses and prisoners, disease soon ravaged the people of Kaifeng, and the siege was stalled to allow a plague to wreak havoc. The white flag was eventually waved after the Jin emperor committed suicide having first abdicated the throne in order to avoid becoming the last Jin emperor. Northern China now belonged to the Mongols.

LAHORE

1241

Death toll: Unknown

By the early 1240s, the Delhi Sultanate had become the next power to be at conflict with the Mongols. The northern Indian sultanate was in the midst of a succession crisis and its power base was weakened. The Mongols smelled blood, and having already traded with the city, knew that some of the inhabitants would welcome their rule. Military leader Malik Kara Kush, however, had other ideas and commanded the Lahore defences bravely and skillfully as the siege began. Kush was in dire need of aid, but a relief army from Delhi came to nothing after a communication breakdown. The sultan managed to escape under the cover of night but the city was taken the next day. Furious street-to-street fighting ensued after the walls crumbled, but the relentless Mongol assault finally proved too much even for Kush. Yet despite its defeat Lahore continued to be a thorn in the side of the Mongols, and it was invaded again a century later.



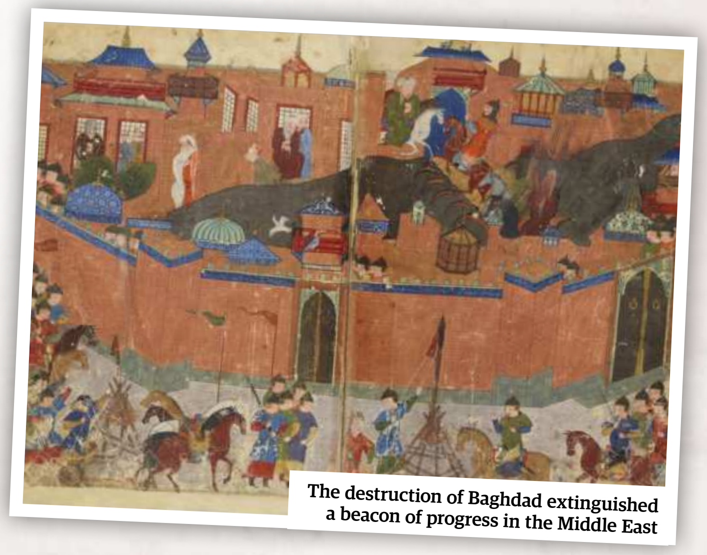
Surrender was often offered before a siege, but if it was refused the Mongols would give no quarter

BAGHDAD

1258

Death toll: More than 200,000

In the 13th century Baghdad was a centre of arts and culture where scholars and engineers from around the world came to study. It was the capital of the Abbasi Caliphate, an Islamic dynasty and a long-time adversary of the Mongols. In 1258, Möngke, one of Genghis Khan's sons, launched a siege on the city that would last ten days. The appetite for the population of Baghdad to defend its city was lessened due to friction between the Shi'a and Sunni Muslims. The bloody battle culminated in the death of the dynasty's leader, the caliph, who was rolled up in a carpet and stamped to death. The fall of Baghdad marked the end of 500 years of Sunni Muslim rule and the Islamic Golden Age. The defeat shook the Muslim world as mosques were levelled to the ground and important historical and religious texts destroyed by fire. With Baghdad in his possession, Möngke set his sights on the remainder of the Middle East and North Africa.



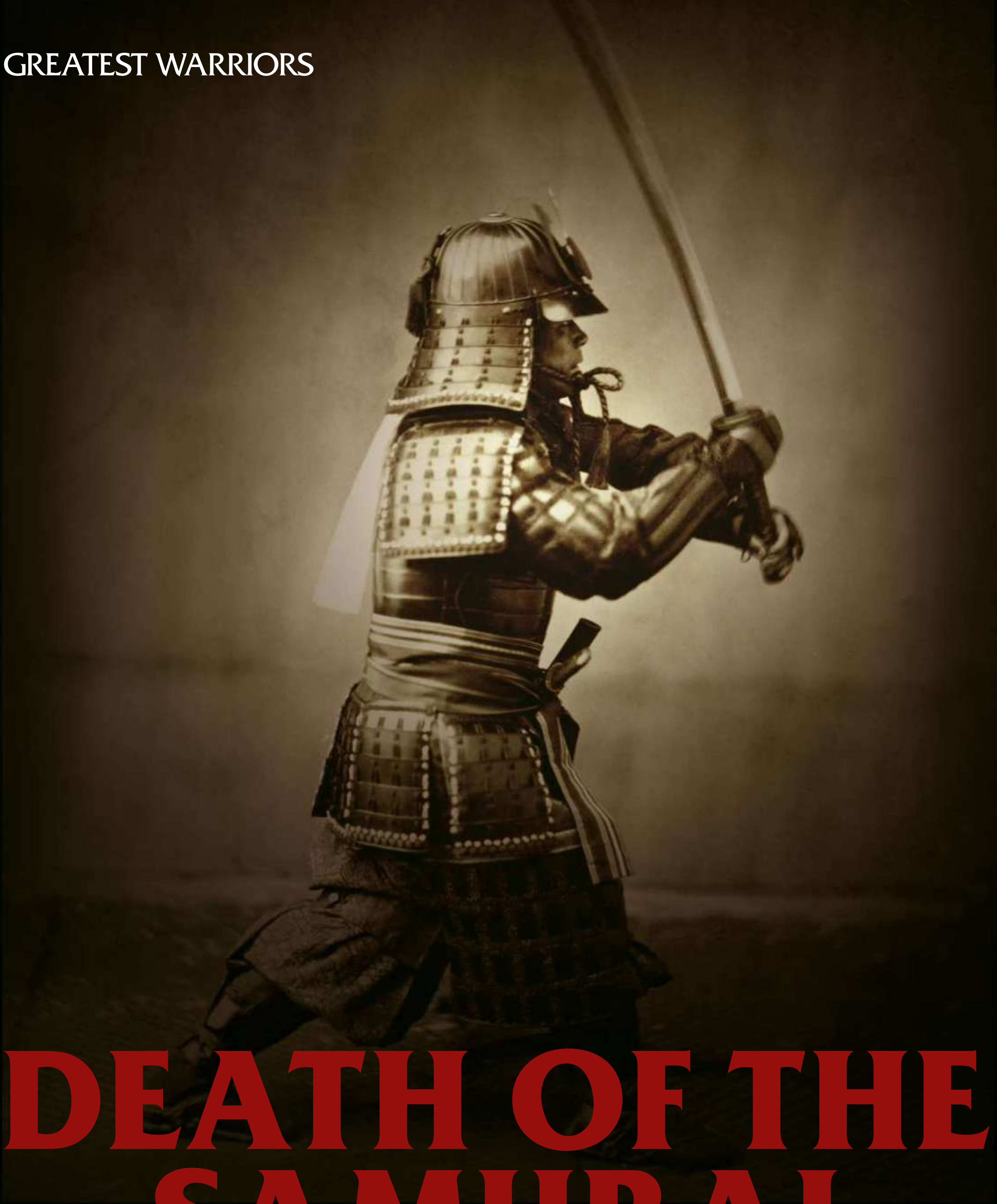
The destruction of Baghdad extinguished a beacon of progress in the Middle East

XIANGYANG AND FANCHENG

1265

Death toll: More than 10,000

The fall of these two Song fortress cities demonstrated the cold efficiency of the Mongol war machine. Their imposing battlements and wide moats posed an almost impregnable obstacle even for the Mongols, so they cut off the cities' supply route at a nearby river confluence. Following this, siege weapons surrounded the cities. The Song defenders had prepared for this and padded the battlements so missiles would simply bounce off. The Mongols countered by introducing longer-range trebuchets constructed by allied Persian engineers to the battlefield. The new technology worked, but even though the walls had been levelled, Song soldiers matched the Mongol infantry as furious fighting broke out. Only once the breach had been widened were the attackers able to overwhelm the city. Eventually, after six bloody years of fighting, the sieges came to an end, heralding the defeat of a territory that had repelled Mongol assaults for three decades. The cities' reward for resisting the invaders for so long was for all its remaining residents to have their throats slit in cold blood.



DEATH OF THE SAMURAI

HOW JAPAN'S WARRIOR CLASS WAS DEFEATED

"IN A WORLD IN WHICH IMMENSE FIREPOWER FROM GATLING GUNS EXISTED… WERE THE SAMURAI REALLY SUCH A VALUABLE COMMODITY ANYMORE?"

As the Sun crept over the mountains, only 40 samurai rebels felt its warmth touch them - the rest of their group had been killed over the previous months in a series of battles. Saigo Takamori, the leader of the rogue group of samurai and formally a highly respected field marshal in the Imperial army, had been wounded in his leg and stomach during the fighting and so beseeched his friend, Beppu Shinsuke, to carry him to a quiet spot. Once there he committed seppuku - a form of suicide by disembowelment practised by the samurai that was considered an honourable way to die. With their leader dead and a force of around 30,000 imperial troops commanded by General Yamagata and his technologically advanced weaponry close by, there seemed little hope for the warriors that for centuries had played a prominent role in Japanese society. Rather than suffer the shame of surrender, Beppu Shinsuke gathered the remaining samurai and led them - brandishing their swords fiercely - on a suicidal charge against the Imperial forces. The Gatling guns barked in the early morning air and cut the doomed men charging straight at them to pieces. The era of the samurai had thereby ended in a brutal yet emphatically memorable fashion.

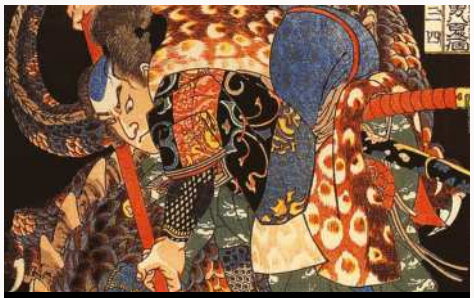
For much of the previous 1,000 years it would have been unthinkable that the samurai would cease to exist, as they had played such an important role in Japanese society and seemed ingrained in the fabric of the country. However, the world in which the samurai lived was changing. Advances in technology aligned with Japan ending its isolationist ways and opening trade routes - and with it an exchange of knowledge and culture - signalling the beginning of the end for a proud warrior caste that did not want to - or see why it should - change its ways. In a world in which immense firepower from Gatling guns existed, pumping out an almost continuous stream of murderous bullets, and ships that could fire artillery on a town from a safe distance, were the samurai really such a valuable commodity anymore?

Although samurai developed a complex code of honour, rituals and ethics (Bushido) that meant being a samurai was a whole way of life, they originally came into existence and then prominence through their fighting skills. In 646 the Taika reforms in Japan led to the country being dominated by a handful of large landowners and created a feudal system similar to that of medieval Europe. These landowners needed their property to be protected from those who would take their crops or lands. In this need for protection lay the origins of the samurai, as the men hired to defend the wealthy slowly began to develop a code. After a succession of weak emperors, the Heian Dynasty began to lose control of the country and the warriors began to move into the power vacuum created. By 1100 they held significant military and political power over the land.

This ushered in a golden period for the samurai, and throughout the next centuries, until the end of the Edo period (1603-1868), this warrior class was at the heart of Japanese life as rival clans battled each other for control of the country and dominance. The Edo period saw greater peace and stability, which meant many samurai were not needed for combat and so became teachers and members of government. Despite the decline in use of the samurai, they were still revered in society and were the only class allowed to carry swords, which was a mark of their rank. This period of peace may have reduced the key role of samurai in Japanese society, but it was nothing compared to what was to come. The world was experiencing political and social revolutions, and against this tide of change a bow and arrow or a sword soon proved an impotent weapon.

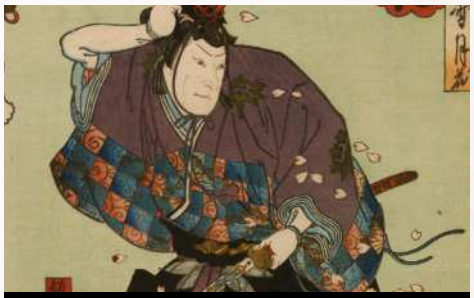
For Japan, this change began in 1853 when Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States

THREE LEGENDARY SAMURAI


A fantastical illustration of Miyamoto Musashi slaying a giant creature

MIYAMOTO MUSASHI

It is believed that Musashi fought over 60 duels without loss and is credited with creating the two-sword fighting technique Nitoryu, where both a standard large sword and a smaller one are used. He began formal sword training very young, and one of the books he wrote declares that he fought his first duel aged 13. Musahi was a skilled writer and painter and his text, *The Book of Five Rings*, covering martial arts and kenjutsu is still read to this day.


A 19th-century, Edo-period, woodblock print depicting Minamoto Tametomo

MINAMOTO TAMETOMO

Samurai weren't just deadly swordsmen – many were also highly skilled with a bow and arrow, and Tametomo was one of the best proponents of this. Supposedly he was born with a left arm six inches longer than his right, meaning he could generate greater power on his shots by drawing the bowstring further back. The great bowman committed seppuku in 1170 after he was captured during battle and the tendons in his left arm were severed, thus rendering him useless as an archer.

Saigo Takamori was the leader of what is regarded as the last stand of the samurai

SAIGO TAKAMORI

Although he is famous for leading the revolt against the Imperial army, Takamori actually had a part in establishing the new government as in 1867 his troops supported the emperor in the Meiji restoration, and he was imperial advisor to the new government. He became disillusioned with what he saw as the country's Westernisation, failure to invade Korea and the dismissing of samurai importance, so he eventually led a doomed revolt against the Imperial forces.

BUSHIDO – THE WARRIOR CODE

LOYALTY

Samurai developed in feudal Japan, where they were employed by large landowners to protect their territory. Samurai were famously loyal to their masters and were expected to show complete obedience to them.

INTEGRITY

One of the most important elements in the code – many samurai believed that without this the rest of the code would fall apart. Integrity is doing what the samurai believes is right without wavering, no matter what.

COURAGE

Samurai were expected to show courage at all times and to commit seppuku to avoid capture. If they were in a position on the battlefield where they could not help their side, they were also expected to take their own life.

MERCY

Samurai had the power of life and death in their hands – if they felt that a peasant had offended their honour, even if they hadn't, they had the right to kill them. With such power, mercy was an important part of the warrior code.

RESPECT

Politeness and courtesy were a large part of samurai life and they were expected to show both to fellow samurai, as well as to their masters and superiors. Failure to adhere to this tenet was a risky and often lethal business.

HONOUR

Fear of disgrace hung over the head of all samurai. Any loss of honour often resulted in long and deadly blood feuds between rival factions. In many cases, committing ritual seppuku was the only honourable option left.

HONESTY

It was held that true samurai disdained money and that having wealth led to luxury, which was seen as a menace to manhood. The Confucian philosophy of the samurai dictated that simplicity was the only way of the warrior.

忠義
義
勇
仁
礼
名誉
真

"AS WORD SPREAD OF THE REBELLION, SAMURAI AND PEASANTS FROM ACROSS JAPAN FLOCKED TO JOIN THE CAUSE"

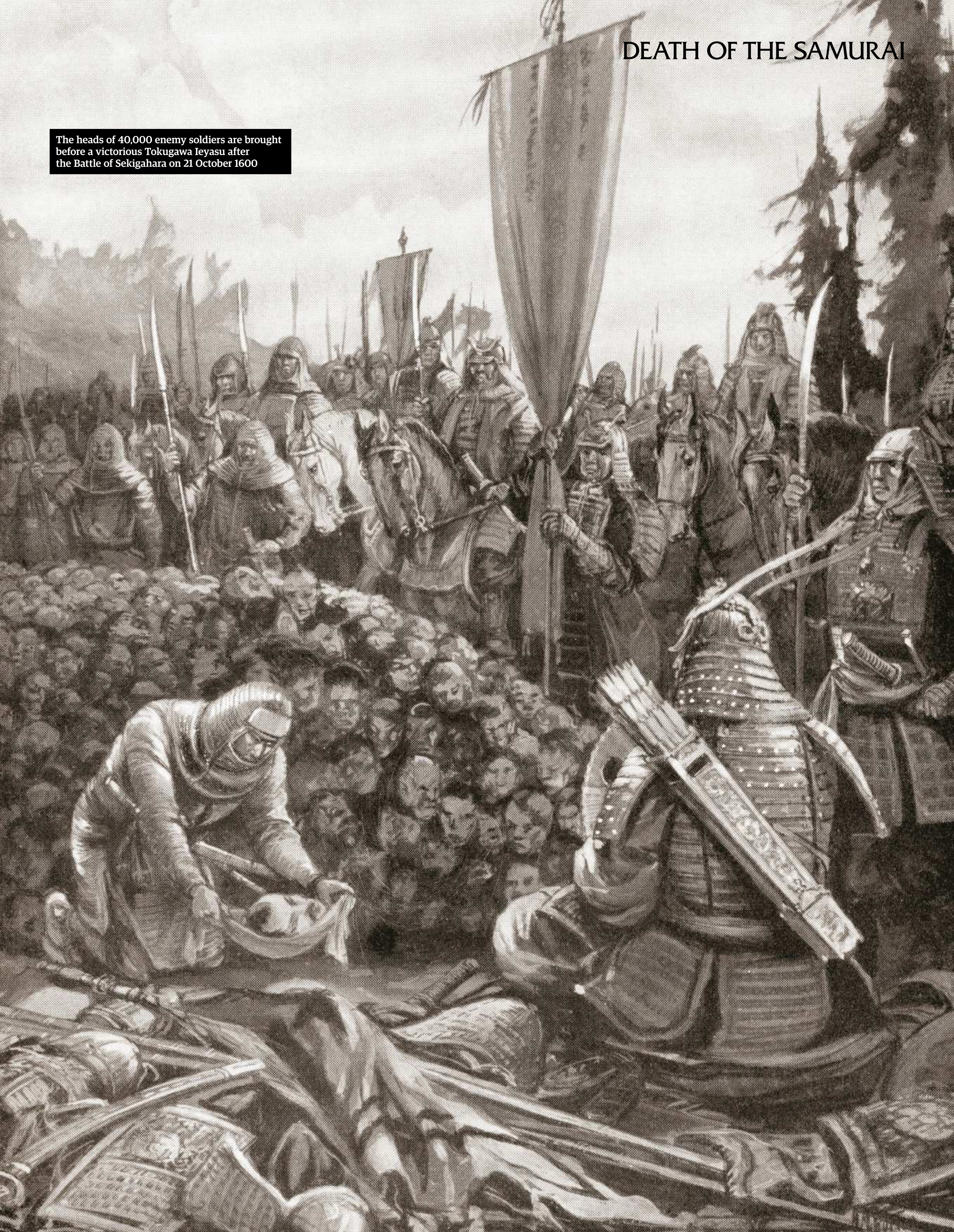
entered Edo Bay (Tokyo Bay) to seek trade links. Japan had previously adopted an isolationist position, but some of the country's political elite had begun to realise that their country was lagging behind other nations in terms of technology – Japan had not industrialised – and modernisation was key in order to compete with other world powers.

At this point Japan was still, in practice, ruled by an emperor, but the real power resided with the shogun (military leader). Understanding that the country needed drastic change, two daimyos (powerful territorial lords) formed an alliance against the ruling shogun and aimed to give the emperor genuine power. The ruling shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, resigned from his position but had no intention of giving up real power, and when Emperor Meiji issued an imperial decree dissolving his house, he sent his samurai army to the imperial city of Kyoto with the aim of deposing the emperor.

As swords from the two opposing factions clashed and clinked in battle, the fate of the country hung in the balance. The Battle of Toba-Fushimi on 27 January 27 1868 ended in defeat for the shogun and lit the touch paper for the Boshin War, which lasted until May 1869 . The war followed the same path as the battle and the emperor, with more modern weaponry and tactics, prevailed. With victory secured, the young emperor – allegedly influenced by his advisors – began the process of reshaping Japan. Social reforms such as universal elementary education for children were introduced, as was investment in heavy machinery to breathe new life into the manufacturing industry. There was also a focus on Westernisation, with an edict issued in 1871 encouraging the adoption of Western-style clothing and food.

Arguably the biggest change that affected the samurai was the forming of a modern conscript army, which meant that their role as the primary fighting men in the country was disappearing and that they were no longer the only strata of society allowed to bear weapons. These new weapons – guns and rifles – required much less skill to operate than those of the samurai and meant that a peasant with a gun could now conceivably defeat a samurai in combat.

If the implementation of a conscript army indicated that the days of the samurai were slipping away, then the next decree by the emperor in 1876 left no one in any doubt; samurai were banned from wearing swords. Their position as a special class had ended. Even though their position of prestige had been in steady decline, for many samurai this was the final insult. The Japanese leaders felt they needed to modernise to avoid being left behind, and the samurai were simply one of the casualties of this process.



The heads of 40,000 enemy soldiers are brought before a victorious Tokugawa Ieyasu after the Battle of Sekigahara on 21 October 1600

"BEING UNABLE TO FIGHT, TAKAMORI DID WHAT HONOUR DICTATED, AS DID THE REMAINING SAMURAI, WHO CHARGED INTO THE BULLETS"

The government believed that in their current form they belonged to a different era and had no relevance in the new Japan they were forging.

There were some samurai that adapted to this modernisation process and, for the good of the country, abandoned their old beliefs and tried to put themselves at the forefront of this new Japan. The government instigated a programme to rehabilitate samurai, helped them find employment and tried to place them at the head of enterprises, as they were more educated than the majority of the population. However, a group of samurai decided that the country was changing too fast and losing its culture and traditions. Led by Saigo Takamori, they decided to take a stand.

Takamori was a great bear of a man who stood nearly six feet tall with a stout and sturdy frame. Born the son of a low-ranking samurai, he had previously fallen into disgrace following the death of his lord and had been exiled to a remote island, but he was later readmitted to a daimyo's army and regained his honour. He had played a prominent role in the setting up of the new Meiji government, and in 1871 he was even left in charge of the caretaker government during the absence of many senior statesmen. Even though he opposed the Westernisation of the country, it was actually when his proposal to invade Korea was rejected that he resigned from the government and returned to Kagoshima, where he set up a local military school. He soon gathered supporters among disenchanted samurai and those harbouring ill intentions against the central government.

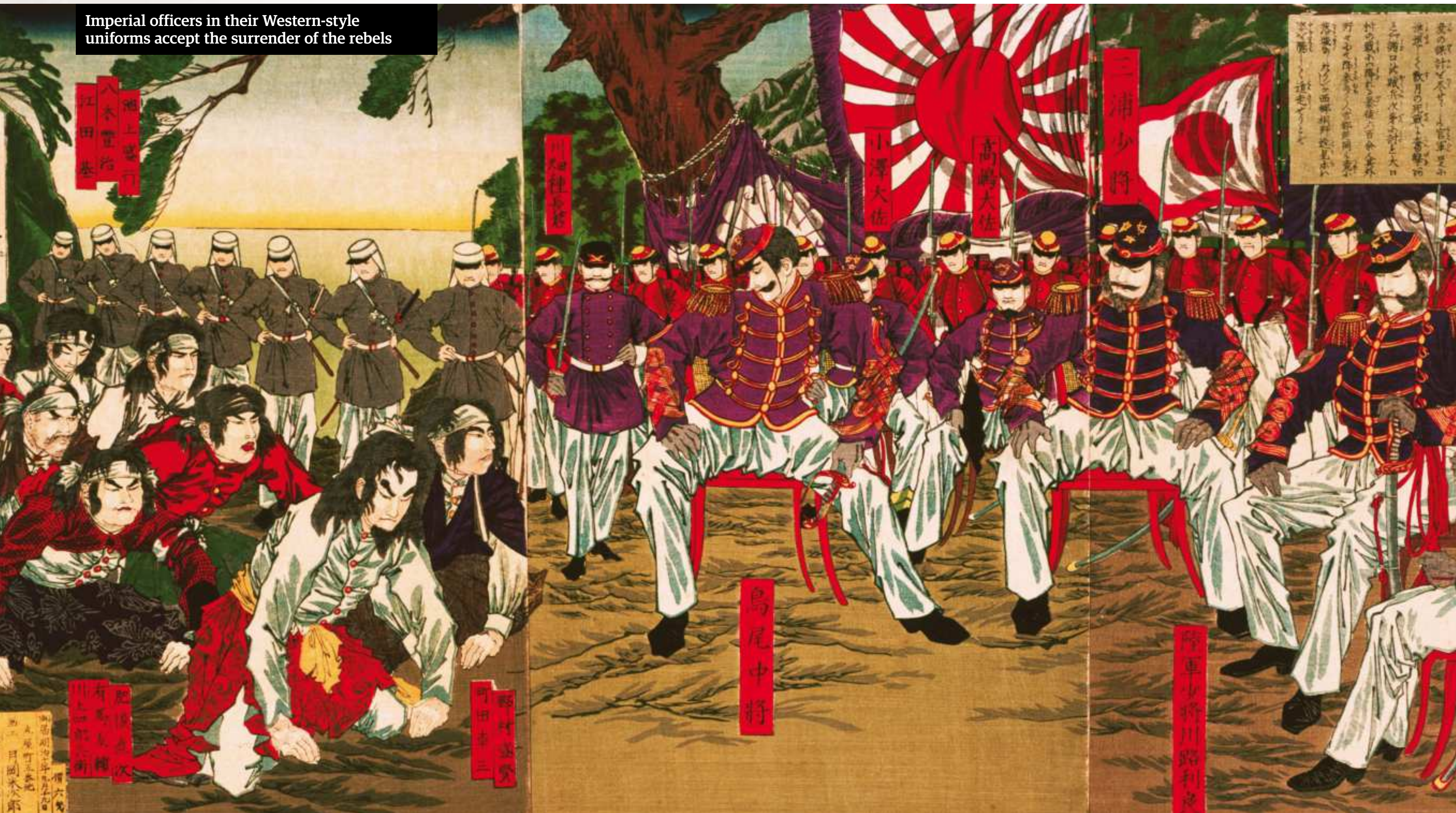
Takamori's footnote in history looked destined to be a minor one as he lived out his days honouring the old samurai tradition and teaching. However, in 1877 a group of samurai rebels raided and occupied government ammunition and weapon depots and proclaimed him as their leader. Reluctantly, he would lead the last samurai charge in history.

As word spread of the rebellion, samurai and peasants from across Japan flocked to join the cause, and soon Takamori was in charge of 40,000 men - a good figure but no match for the government's force of 300,000 men trained in modern warfare and equipped with appropriate weaponry. The rebel forces marched on the well-fortified Kumamoto Castle and, with their samurai and peasant force armed with guns, surrounded the castle. For two bloody nights the army threw itself at the walls in a ferocious attempt to scale them, but the attacks were repelled time and again by gunfire, and the samurai had no coordinated plan for how to breach the fortifications. When a government relief force arrived and engaged with the rebels, several sharp clashes ensued before both sides retreated. The rebellion went on to last for six months and, while both sides gained victories, the government army could replenish any lost forces much easier than the rebels, who were gradually ground down by superior technological firepower, such as warships. It is estimated that the imperial forces lost more than 6,000 troops and had 10,000 wounded, while the much smaller samurai army suffered 7,000 killed and 11,000 wounded.

Following a series of engagements, the depleted rebel force sneaked into Kagoshima and took possession of a castle mountain in Shiroyma. It took the government troops several days to locate them, but when they did there was no doubt what the eventual outcome would be. Takamori organised a sake party for his closest friends, an impressive display of bloody-mindedness as he must have known what was coming. It was to be his last night alive, as at 3.00am imperial forces stormed the mountain castle.

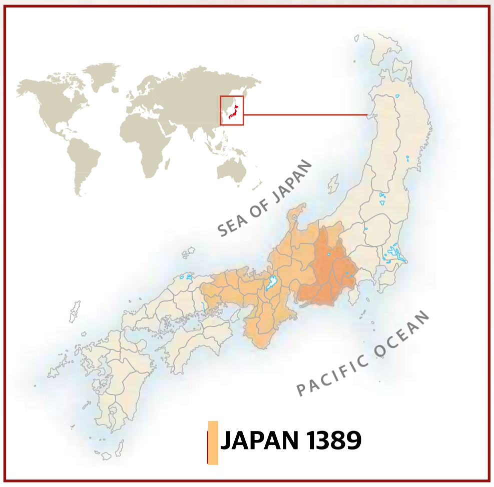
By the time they were repelled, only 40 of the rebels were still alive, and Takamori was badly injured. Being rendered unable to fight, Takamori did what honour dictated, as did the remaining samurai, who charged into the bullets of the waiting imperial army.

The age of the samurai may have been extinguished that day, but it died displaying all of the central tenants that had made this warrior class so legendary - honour, courage and loyalty.


三浦少将
高嶋大佐
小澤大佐
鳥尾中将

Imperial officers in their Western-style uniforms accept the surrender of the rebels

ANATOMY OF A SAMURAI



SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF FEUDAL JAPAN

Japanese society was organised into clans or families who disputed over farmland

EMPEROR
Of divine origin, the emperor did not care much about politics or the economy.

SHOGUN
Shogun were military leaders with political and economic power.

DAIMYO
Powerful court nobles who held large domains and collected ichimangoku or salaries.

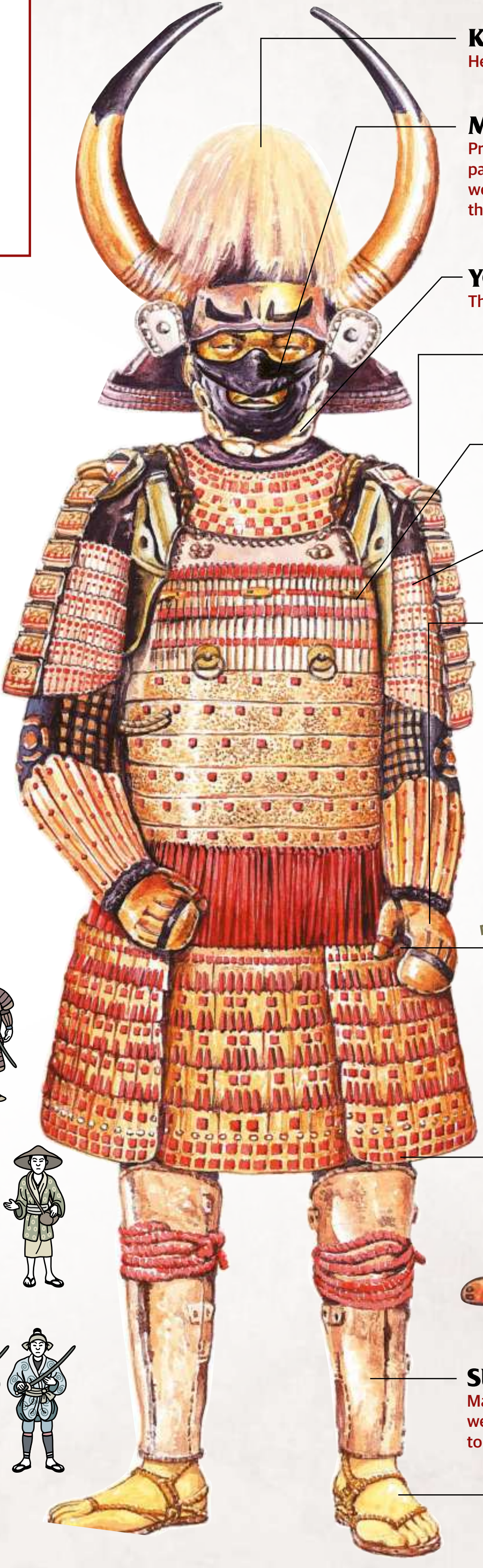
SAMURAI
In service to a daimyo, samurai owed him absolute obedience and unwavering loyalty.

CRAFTSMEN, VILLAGERS, MERCHANTS
Under the protection of a daimyo.

RŌNIN
Wandering, masterless samurai who were often dishonoured and outcast from society.

THE WARRIOR
His aim was to achieve a heroic death in battle.

WEAPONS
Each warrior wore two swords as a symbol of distinction of their samurai caste.



KABUTO
Helmet of iron.

MEMPO
Protective masks painted with fierce faces were used to frighten the enemy.

YODARE-KAKE
Throat protection

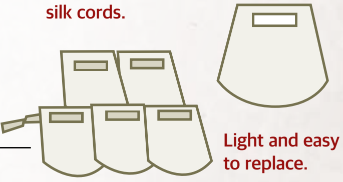
SODE
Shoulder protector

DO
A breastplate that allowed large and free movements.

KOTE
Arm protector.

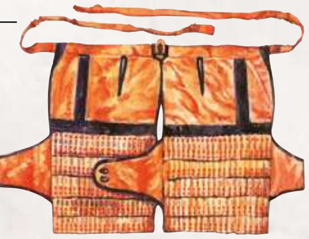
TEKKO
Hand protector.

KUSARI
Kusari protected the upper thigh and was made from lacquered iron plates connected together with several silk cords.



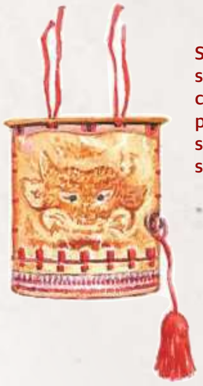
Light and easy to replace.

HAIDATE
The haidate protected the lower part of the thigh and was worn under the kusazuri.

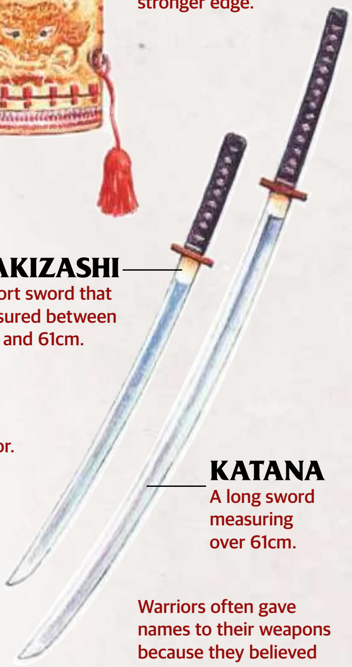


SUNEATE
Made from leather and cloth, suneate were tied with cords around the calves to protect them.

SANDALS



Swords were initially straight. Later the curved shape was preferred, in the search for an even stronger edge.



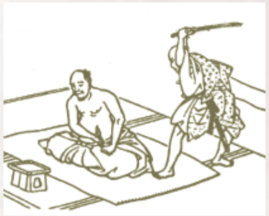
WAKIZASHI
A short sword that measured between 30.5 and 61cm.

KATANA
A long sword measuring over 61cm.

Warriors often gave names to their weapons because they believed they were the soul of their fighting capacity.

BUSHIDO CODE
Bushido means 'way of the warrior-knight', and it required an almost religious dedication to military life. This code set moral standards and behavioural patterns for all samurai.

SEPPUKU
Only samurai carried out this ritual suicide in preference to a dishonorable death.



Samurai cut their own stomach and then a trusted friend cut off their heads.

SHADOW WARRIORS

THE SECRET WORLD OF THE NINJA

THE ELITE NINJA WERE THE HIGHLY TRAINED MASTERS OF ESPIONAGE, INFILTRATION, SABOTAGE AND ASSASSINATION

Japan's legendary ninja are shrouded in myth and their exploits steeped in Japanese folklore, blurring the lines between fact and fiction. However, the real-life exploits of the ninja are far more fascinating than the legends that have grown around them since their golden age during the 15th and 16th centuries.

The ninja, or 'shinobi', emerged in the mid-15th century. Although the skills most associated with them - spying, infiltration and assassination - had been practised before the emergence of ninja, it wasn't until the mid-1400s that a class of specially trained warriors appeared. The ninja have typically been seen as the antithesis of the honourable samurai, but the relationship is in fact much more complicated. Ninja were often hired mercenaries, but examples can be found of samurai also acting as ninja.

Specially trained spies and assassins began to appear during the 15th century, acting as mercenaries for hire by warlords to spy on, raid, sabotage and murder their rivals. The term 'shinobi' came to describe these mercenaries, who originated from the warrior caste - they were not merely peasant farmers; they were at least ashigaru (foot soldiers) and in some cases even samurai. At first, fathers passed the trade on to their children, but as the profession grew guilds and clans were created.

Ninja were called upon to carry out the most dangerous missions, and often their survival was not guaranteed. Their abilities saw them act as spies, scouts, infiltrators, assassins and arsonists. The chief role of the ninja was to gather intelligence, either by infiltrating an enemy castle or camp or through reconnaissance. A contemporary instructional poem advised ninja to, "Always draw what you have learned while scouting, and then report it to the strategist directly in person." Another recommended, "If guiding and planning the way while moving position, the essential information you must bring are the mountains, the rivers, and the distance from the enemy." On countless occasions the information gathered by ninja helped turn the tide of battles.

Sabotage was another important role for the ninja, who often infiltrated enemy castles to set them on fire. In 1541, elite Iga ninja infiltrated Kasagi Castle and set fire to the buildings in the outer bailey. This sort of raid became the speciality of the ninja, with similar attacks at Sawayama in 1558 and Maibara in 1561.

Ninja have become synonymous with assassination, and warlords often employed ninja

to kill their rivals. The ninja were so skilful and stealthy that castle designers began to implement anti-ninja defences, including pressure-sensitive floorboards and hidden weapons. Many castles, like Himeji, were also designed to be mazes to those not familiar with their corridors and passages.

These countermeasures were not always successful, however, and dozens of assassination attempts using various methods - from throat cutting to dripping poison into sleeping victims' mouths - were made.

During the vicious Onin War - which ravaged Japan between 1467 and 1477 and destabilised the country, plunging it into the chaotic era known as the Sengoku period - the shinobi emerged as a professional class of warriors. The rival daimyos (lords) who emerged during this time used ninja as another weapon in their arsenal, employing them as spies, scouts, kisho (surprise attackers) and agitators to disrupt their enemies. While they were often treated with suspicion and mistrusted even by their own allies, the ninja's skills were grudgingly respected. By the 1600s, the lines between the ninja and samurai class had become more blurred, with prominent samurai like Hattori Hanzo also being skilled ninja.

Ninja were instrumental in the Siege of Hara Castle. The Christian rebellion was the last conflict to involve them

For nearly 2,000 years, two family clans provided ninja for the warring shoguns and daimyo. These clans, the Iga and the Kōga, took their names from their regions, which neighboured one another. The villages of this mountainous area became the breeding ground for Japan's most effective professional ninja. Free from feudal lords, these ninja were able to devote their lives to training in ninjutsu - the 'art of stealth'.

The Iga ninja were often retainers of the Ashikaga shogunate, until it was overthrown by Oda Nobunaga in 1573. In 1581, Nobunaga consolidated his power by destroying Ashikaga's supporters, invading Iga and razing many of the region's villages. So fast was the attack that the Iga were unable to utilise their ninjutsu skills in their defence and were overwhelmed when they were forced to fight conventionally.

The Iga ninja that survived fled through the mountains to serve Tokugawa Ieyasu. One of the greatest Iga ninja, Hattori Hanzo, became a close friend and bodyguard of Ieyasu, protecting him and helping him escape Nobunaga. For this, Hanzo was rewarded with land and power as Ieyasu gained enough power to became shogun in 1603. The remnants of the Iga served as guards and spies for the Tokugawa shogunate into the 18th century.

The ninja of the smaller Kōga clan acted independently as mercenaries during the 14th century, with Kōga ninja often serving rival warlords. However, in the 15th century they were called upon by their local daimyo, the Rokkaku, to defend their land. Following the Onin War, the Rokkaku began to rebel against the Ashikaga shogunate, seizing territory and ignoring the shogun's orders. In 1487, Ashikaga Yoshihisa, the ninth shogun of the Ashikaga shogunate, led an army to besiege Rokkaku castles. It was during this conflict that the Iga ninja, serving the shogunate, and Kōga ninja clashed. One by one, Rokkaku castles fell and their lords fled, ordering their Kōga to fight to the death. The Kōga ninja were masters of guerrilla warfare and launched an insurgency, confounding the shogun at every turn. They exploited their expert knowledge of the local geography, hiding in the mountains and launching raids on Yoshihisa's forces. The ninja attacked the shogun's camps, causing chaos and confusion with fires and smoke screens.

After holding off the shogun's troops for a few years, Yoshihisa's death in 1489 finally ended the occupation of the Kōga's territory. The skill and bravery of the Kōga ninja's guerrilla war made them famous, and they gained a formidable reputation as both conventional and unconventional warriors. During the 1560s, Tokugawa Ieyasu hired Kōga ninja, led by Tomo Sukesada, to raid Imagawa clan outposts. Sukesada and his Kōga ninja infiltrated

◆

THE ROLES OF A NINJA

WHILE THE PRIMARY TASK OF THE MULTIFACETED NINJA WAS TO BE A COVERT OPERATIVE, THEY WERE ALSO HIGHLY SKILLED TACTICIANS AND CONVENTIONAL WARRIORS

SPIES

One of the ninja's main tasks was to gather intelligence for their lords before and during military campaigns. Using their clandestine skills to blend in with the enemy, they would infiltrate camps and castles. This allowed them to map defences, obtain passwords and report on troop movements. In 1487, Yoshihisa ninja infiltrated a Takayori camp at Magari, reporting back vital information before an attack was launched.

SOLDIERS

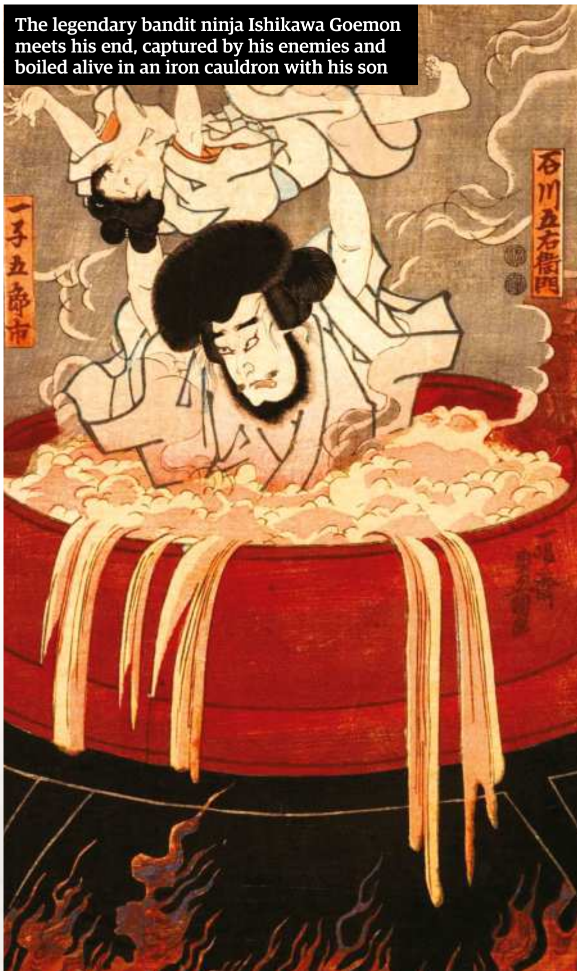
While ninja were masters of stealth and staying hidden from enemy combatants, they were also supremely skilled in conventional combat. Some ninja were also samurai, and a favoured tactic during battle was to create confusion among the enemy by capturing their banners. More commonly, however, ninja were used to bring prolonged sieges to a swift conclusion by acting as ruthless saboteurs.

SABOTEURS

As ninja were able to easily infiltrate into enemy strongholds, one of their main duties became conducting sabotage. Their primary weapon for such an act was fire. The classic Japanese castles of the period were constructed from wood with stone foundations, which made them extremely vulnerable to flame. At the Siege of Sawayama in 1558, ninja infiltrated the enemy's castle and set it alight, ending the stalemate.

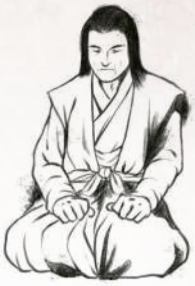
ASSASSINS

The most legendary role of the ninja was as a ruthless and silent assassin. Warlord Oda Nobunaga was the target of many such attempts. Sugitani Zenjubō, an expert marksman, tried and failed to kill him in 1571. In 1573, Manabe Rokurō infiltrated Nobunaga's castle but was detected and forced to commit seppuku. In 1579, Kido Yazaemon and his ninja opened fire on Nobunaga, missing him but killing seven attendants.



The legendary bandit ninja Ishikawa Goemon meets his end, captured by his enemies and boiled alive in an iron cauldron with his son

石川五右衛門
一子五郎市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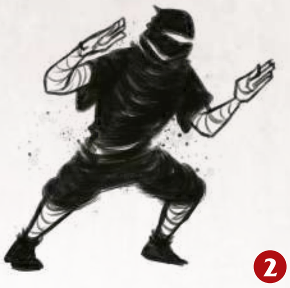
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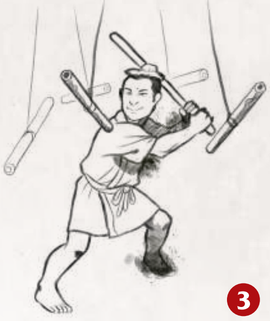
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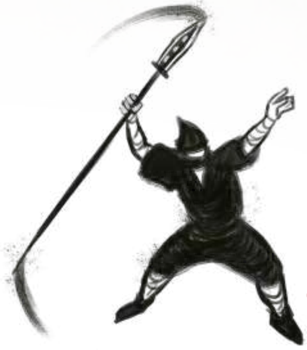
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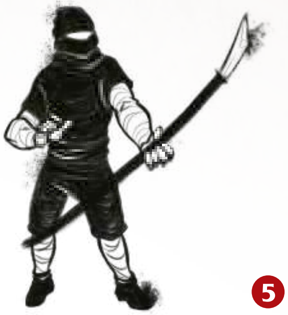
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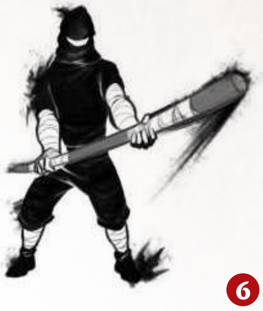
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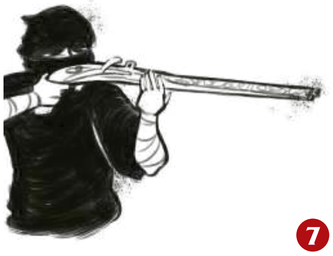
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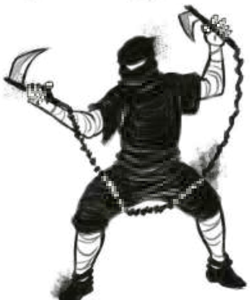
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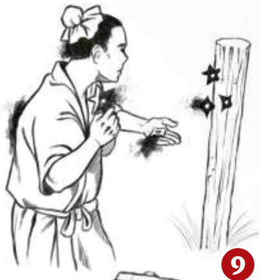
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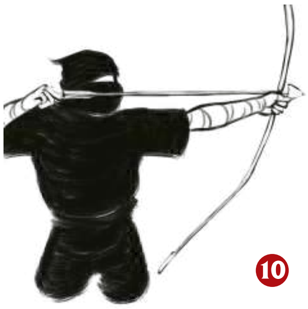
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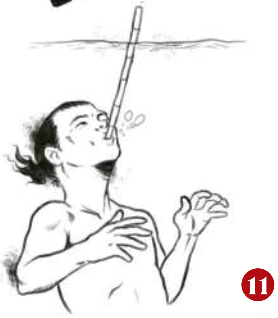
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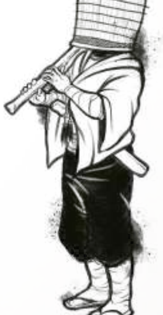
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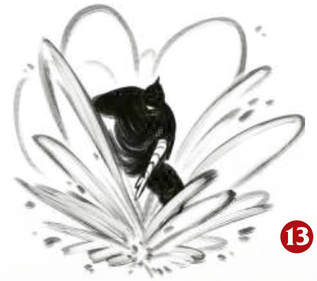
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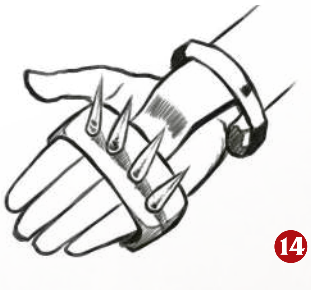
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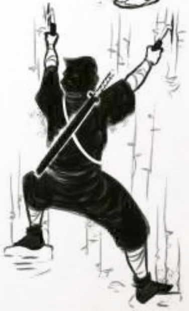
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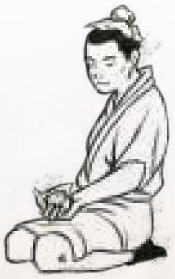
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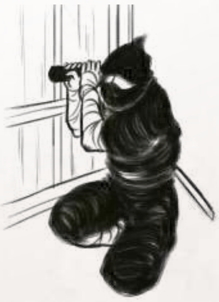
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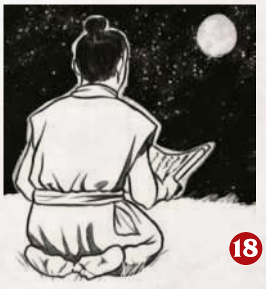
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NINJUTSU TRAINING

NINJA WERE TRAINED FROM AN EARLY AGE TO MASTER THE SKILLS OF AN EXPERT SHINOBI

Ninja spent their entire lives honing the skills, disciplines and abilities they needed to become masters of ninjutsu. The skills and traditions of the ninja were passed on from father to son or sensei to pupil, creating ninja dynasties. Training began at a very early age – like samurai they began almost as soon as they could walk, learning the 18 Disciplines, including how to fight with a vast array of weapons, from katanas to throwing stars. In addition to the 18 Disciplines, they also learned the 'Bugei Jūhappan', or the 18 Martial Arts. A ninja would also learn how to make poisons and explosives, use disguises, evade capture, break into buildings and use guns. They were extremely fit and capable of impressive physical feats such as running for a long period of time, scaling castle walls, leaping great distances and fighting multiple opponents without weapons. Ninja also developed psychological skills, learning not to fear death and building on the samurai's tradition of loyalty – while serving their lord they acted clandestinely without expectation of public reward. Unlike the samurai, ninja specialised in covert warfare; their task was to infiltrate and weaken their enemies by assassinations and disrupting their ability to fight. Formal training of ninja began in the 1460s and continued through to the 18th century; today, a handful of schools keep the skills alive.

THE 18 DISCIPLINES

1	**Seishinteki Kyōyō**	Spiritual refinement
2	**Ninpō Taijutsu**	Athletic and hand-to-hand combat techniques
3	**Kenpō**	Sword fighting
4	**Sōjutsu**	Fighting with spears
5	**Naginatajutsu**	Glaive fighting techniques
6	**Bōjutsu**	Fighting with a staff
7	**Kayakujutsu**	Using firearms, gunpowder and explosives
8	**Kusarigamajutsu**	Fighting with sickle and chain
9	**Shurikenjutsu**	Throwing weapons techniques
10	**Kyūjutsu**	Archery
11	**Suijutsu**	Swimming and water-crossing techniques
12	**Hensōjutsu**	The art of disguise
13	**Ongyōjutsu**	Concealment and disappearing techniques
14	**Kakushi Bukijutsu**	The use of concealed weapons
15	**Ninki**	Mastering tools used to climb and break into houses
16	**Ninyakujutsu**	Herbal medicines and first-aid skills
17	**Gunryaku Heihō**	Intelligence gathering, covert techniques and unorthodox strategies
18	**Tenmon**	Astrology, astronomy, meteorology, geography and topography

SEVEN FAMOUS NINJAS

HATTORI HANZŌ

1540S–1596

Hanzō was also a samurai, a master tactician and an expert in spear fighting in the service of the Tokugawa shogunate. During the 1580s, he and his ninja protected their lord, helping him become the ruler of all Japan.

MOCHIZUKI CHIYOME

1540S–1570S

Mochizuki is one of the most famous female ninja. She founded an all-female espionage network from orphaned girls, refugees and prostitutes to spy for her husband's uncle, Takeda Shingen.

FŪMA KOTARŌ

1550–1603

Kotarō was the leader of the independent ninja Fūma clan. Kotarō served the Hōjō clan, and in 1580 he and his ninja covertly infiltrated the Takeda clan's camp causing chaos and panic.

ISHIKAWA GOEMON

1558-94

Goemon was an outlaw ninja and Japan's answer to Robin Hood, who stole from wealthy feudal lords and daimyos to give to the poor. He was finally captured and boiled to death in a cauldron.

TOMO SUKESADA

16TH CENTURY

Sukesada led the Kōga ninja. He and 80 of his men were hired by Nobunaga to destroy Kaminogou Castle, held by the Imagawa clan. They set fire to the castle's towers and killed 200 defenders.

KATO DANZŌ

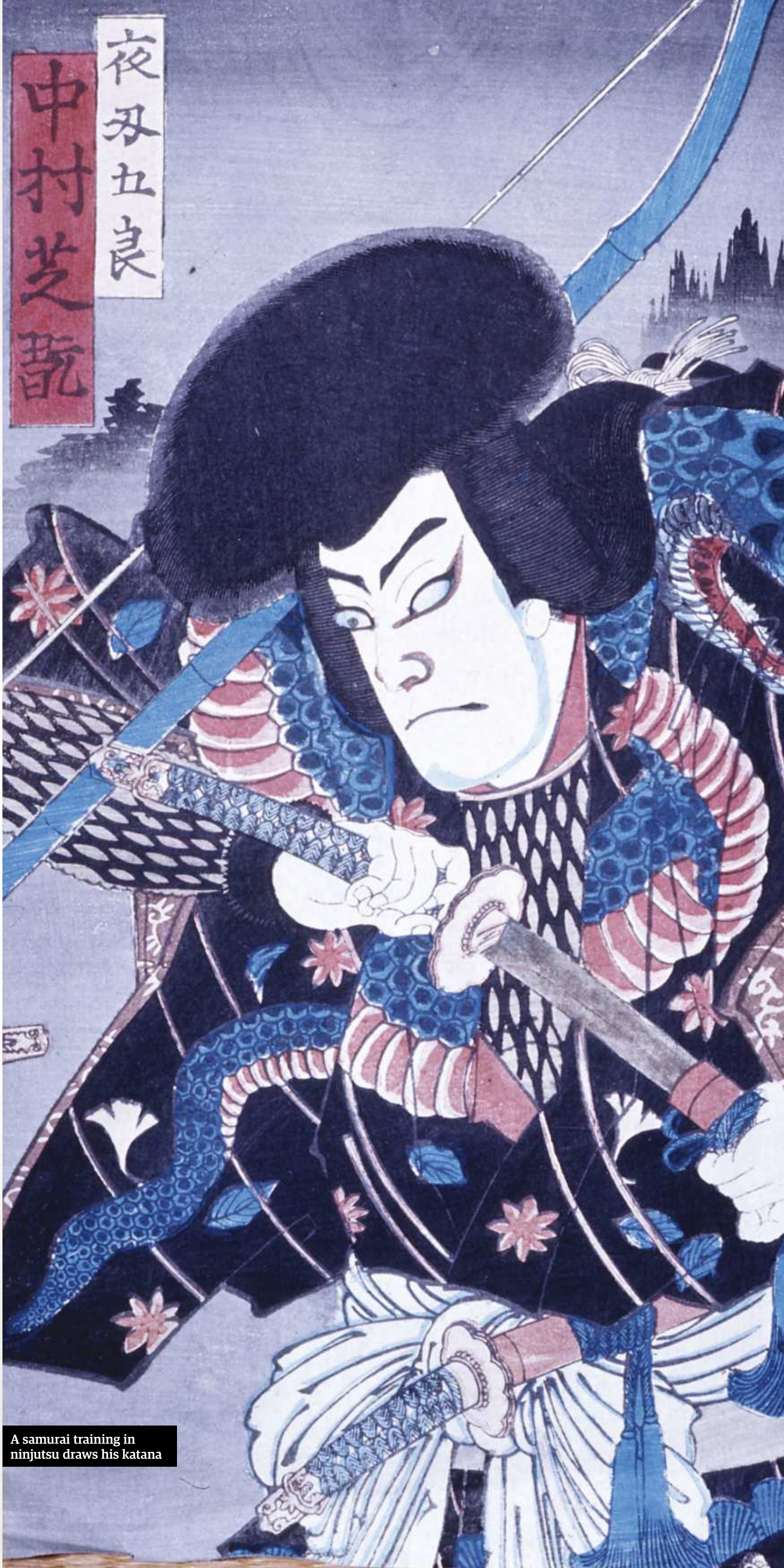
1500–1569

Danzō was a skilled illusionist who combined this talent with his ninja training to become known for his ability to create distractions and disappear. He served Uesugi Kenshin.

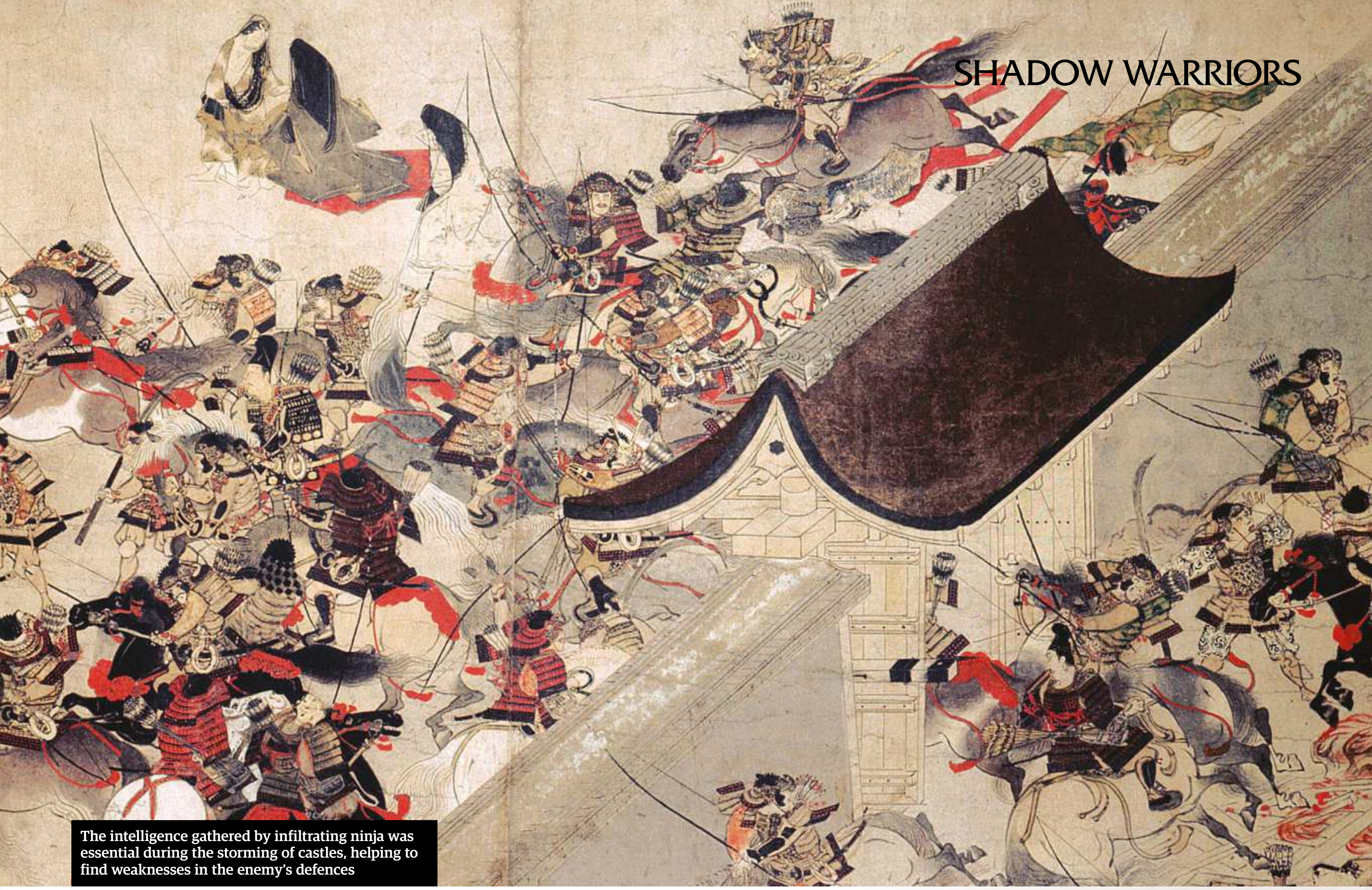
KIDO YAZAEMON

1539–1589

Yazaemon became an expert with the Tanegashima matchlock arquebus. In 1579, he led a band of ninja armed with muskets in an assassination attempt on warlord Oda Nobunaga.



A samurai training in ninjutsu draws his katana



The intelligence gathered by infiltrating ninja was essential during the storming of castles, helping to find weaknesses in the enemy's defences

Imagawa Castle and set fire to its towers, causing panic and killing much of the garrison. They again played a pivotal role during the Battle of Sekigahara, where they helped defend Fushimi Castle and hold up Ishida Mitsunari's attack. Tokugawa Ieyasu's victory at the battle enabled him to create the Tokugawa shogunate, which would rule until 1868.

From 1600 onwards the Kōga and Iga ninja worked together as the shogun's elite guard, defending his principle seat of power at Edo Castle. The Tokugawa shogunate presided over several years of peace in Japan, but in 1637 the ninja were called upon one last time.

The Shimabara Rebellion saw Christian rebels led by Amakusa Shirō rise up after their taxes were raised. As the shogun's armies closed in on the rebels, they fell back to the castle at Hara and dug in for a long siege. With their expertise in siege warfare, the Kōga ninja returned to the field. Accounts recall that during the siege they were sent to scout the Christian rebels' defences. They reconnoitred the plan of the castle, the distance between bastions, the height of the walls and the depth of the moat. On their return, they created a detailed plan of the defences for the shogun. The ninja were then tasked with raiding the enemy lines, capturing provisions and learning the enemy's strength. During the final assault on Hara, Kōga ninja acted as liaisons and runners between the attacking forces. The castle was quickly overrun, and the Kōga ninja had played an essential role in the suppression of Christianity in Japan. The religion wouldn't resurface until the 19th century.

While ninja from Iga and Kōga are some of the most revered, there were other active groups. One band, led by Fūma Kotarō, served the Hōjō clan, but when their lord was defeated they became bandits. Ishikawa Goemon is another ninja who turned to banditry. He became a legendary Robin Hood-like figure by stealing from the wealthy daimyo. He trained under Momochi Sandayu, an Iga master of ninjutsu, before he became a nukenin, or runaway ninja. For 15 years Goemon stole from the rich feudal overlords and gave to the poor.

As a legendary figure, there are conflicting accounts of his death. The most common tells that in 1594, following the murder of his wife and capture of his son, he attempted to infiltrate Toyotomi Hideyoshi's castle and assassinate him. However, the guards were alerted to his presence when he accidentally knocked a bell off a table, and he was promptly captured. Goemon was then executed by being boiled alive in an iron cauldron with his young son. Even today, Goemon remains a folklore legend in Japan.

Not all ninja were men. The female onna-bugeisha were warriors belonging to the Japanese nobility, and there were also female ninja, or kunoichi. Women were well suited to the clandestine role of the ninja and were uniquely able to infiltrate enemy strongholds in the guise of servants, dancers, concubines and geisha. The kunoichi also sometimes acted as assassins.

The most famous female ninja was Mochizuki Chiyome, who was descended from Kōga ninja and the wife of a samurai lord. When her husband was killed in battle, she came under the protection of her late husband's uncle, Takeda Shingen, the leader of the Takeda clan. Shingen asked Mochizuki to form a network of kunoichi to spy on rival clans and daimyo. Mochizuki recruited a band of female orphans, refugees and prostitutes, who she trained in the clandestine arts of the ninja. Mochizuki's kunoichi gathered information and acted as messengers, often travelling as miko (priestesses) to avoid suspicion. Posing as geisha, prostitutes and servants, the kunoichi could gain access to the most heavily guarded strongholds. Like their male counterparts, they were also trained assassins. The network grew to be several hundred strong before Shingen's death in 1573, after which Mochizuki vanishes from the historical record.

Following the end of the Shimabara Rebellion in 1638, Japan entered a long period of peace during the Edo period. This was the last great battle fought by the ninja before they slowly faded into obscurity. Fighting became confined to small skirmishes and short-lived rebellions. During the 18th century, the ninja's traditional role of spying and intelligence gathering is thought to have been taken over by the Oniwaban, who reported to the shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune, providing information on the feudal lords he ruled. The traditions of the ninja continue, but only a shrinking handful can now claim to be true shinobi.

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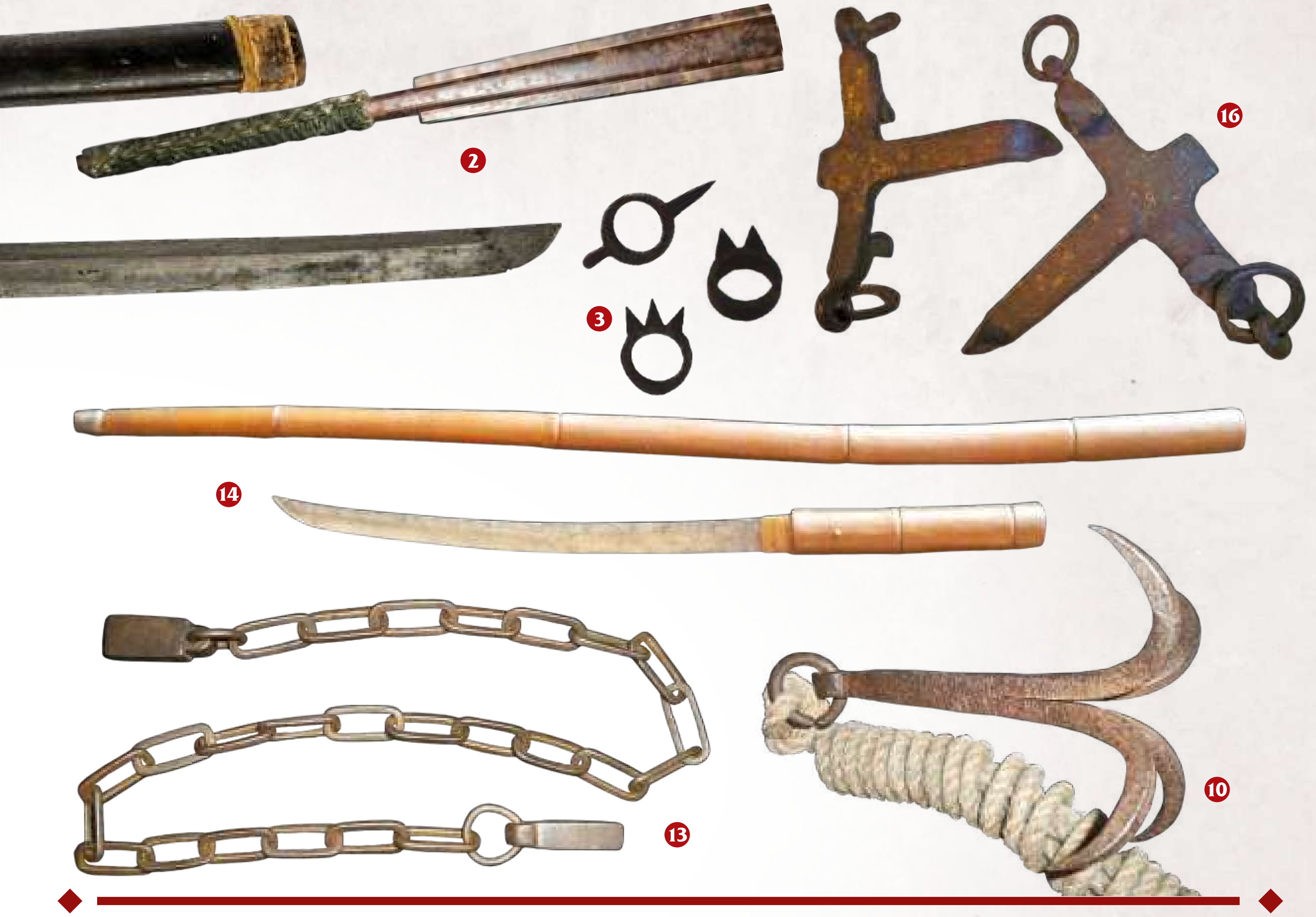

A NINJA'S KIT BAG

NINJUTSU ARMAMENT WAS DESIGNED TO ENABLE NINJA TO INFILTRATE, ASSASSINATE AND ESCAPE, AND THEY WERE MASTERS OF MANY WEAPONS AND TOOLS

1 **KYOKETSU-SHOGE** This double-edged blade attached to a 3.5-metre-long rope or chain was developed from a peasant knife. It was a ranged weapon and could also be used to climb walls.

2 **TESSEN** The tessen, or war fan, was made from iron and used as a covert weapon and to deflect darts and arrows.

3 **KAKUTE** These small, viciously spiked iron rings would often be tipped with poisons.

4 **SAI** Typically used in pairs, sai and jitte were blunt weapons used to beat opponents with side guards to hook into clothing. It was also a symbol of rank.

5 **CHIGIRIKI** Similar to a European Medieval flail, the chigiriki had an iron weight attached to a wooden shaft.

6 **BO-SHURIKEN** A simple, spike-like throwing weapon, it was used to slow and injure opponents at close ranges.

7 **SHURIKEN** The ninja's most famous weapon, the throwing star was never intended to kill. They could be wrapped with fuses and used to create a cloud of poisonous smoke.

8 **BO-HIYA** Originating from Korea, the bo-hiya fire arrow was originally shot from bows, but in the 16th century, matchlock arquebuses arrived in Japan, and samurai and ninja began firing bo-hiya from them.

9 **KATANA** The katana is synonymous with the samurai but ninja also used the deadly razor-sharp artisan-made swords. Using the katana was one of the martial arts a ninja had to master.

10 **KAGINAWA** Part of the ninja's special equipment, this grappling hook was used to scale walls.

11 **KUSARIGAMA** The kusarigama was made up of a sickle with an iron chain that could be used to entangle an opponent's weapon before striking at them with the blade; the art of this weapon's use was called kusarigamajutsu.

12 **MAKIBISHI** These sharp, spiked iron caltrops could be used against men and horses.

13 **MANRIKI** The manriki, or kusari-fundo, was made up of a chain (kusari) of any length with two weights (fundo) at each end.

14 **SHIKOMIZUE** The covert shikomizue sword cane was the perfect weapon for a ninja, as it was ideal for sneaking into areas where weapons were not allowed.

15 **TEKKO-KAGI** Like many of the ninja's weapons, the tekko-kagi was developed from a farm tool. Worn on both hands, they were used to scratch an opponent's weak points.

16 **ASHIKO CLEATS** Ninja tied these iron cleats to their feet and used the spikes to help them scale the walls of castles and fortresses.

17 **YUMI BOW** Used by both ninja and samurai, the powerful yumi continued to evolve throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Ninja were required to master kyūjutsu (the art of the bow) and began by learning to rapidly hit targets on foot and horseback.

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BEST & BOLDEST

78 BRAVEST BATTLERS

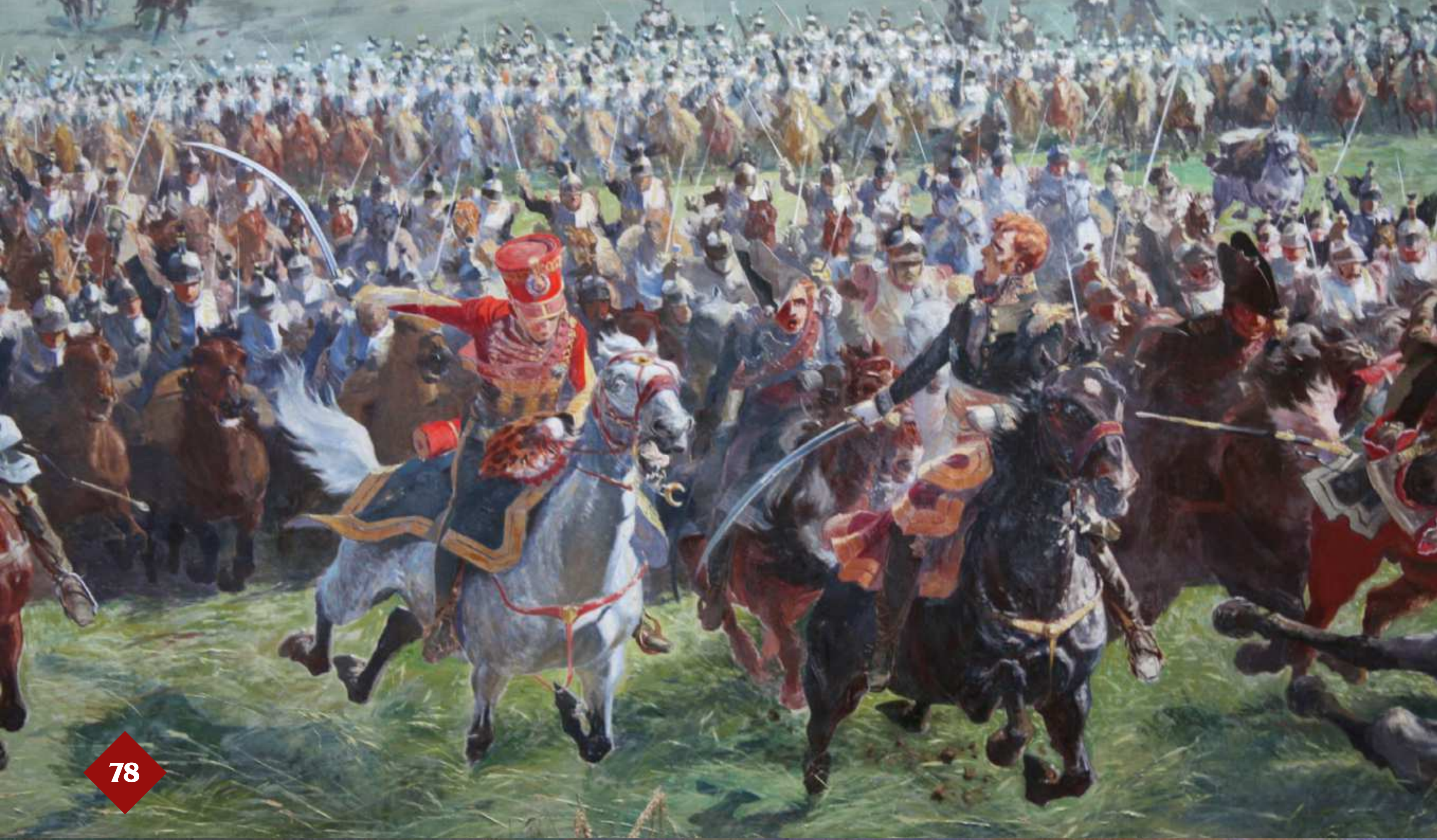
Whether they were fending off rampant barbarians, leading a dashing cavalry charge or shooting their way across no-man's land, these fearless soldiers all helped to change the course of history

86 HISTORY'S SHARPEST SWORDSMEN

Meet five of history's most deadly duellers, including the man who fought for five kings and the warrior still hailed as a sword saint. En garde!

88 WARRIOR WOMEN

War has never been an all-male arena, as the stunning exploits of these ferocious female fighters prove



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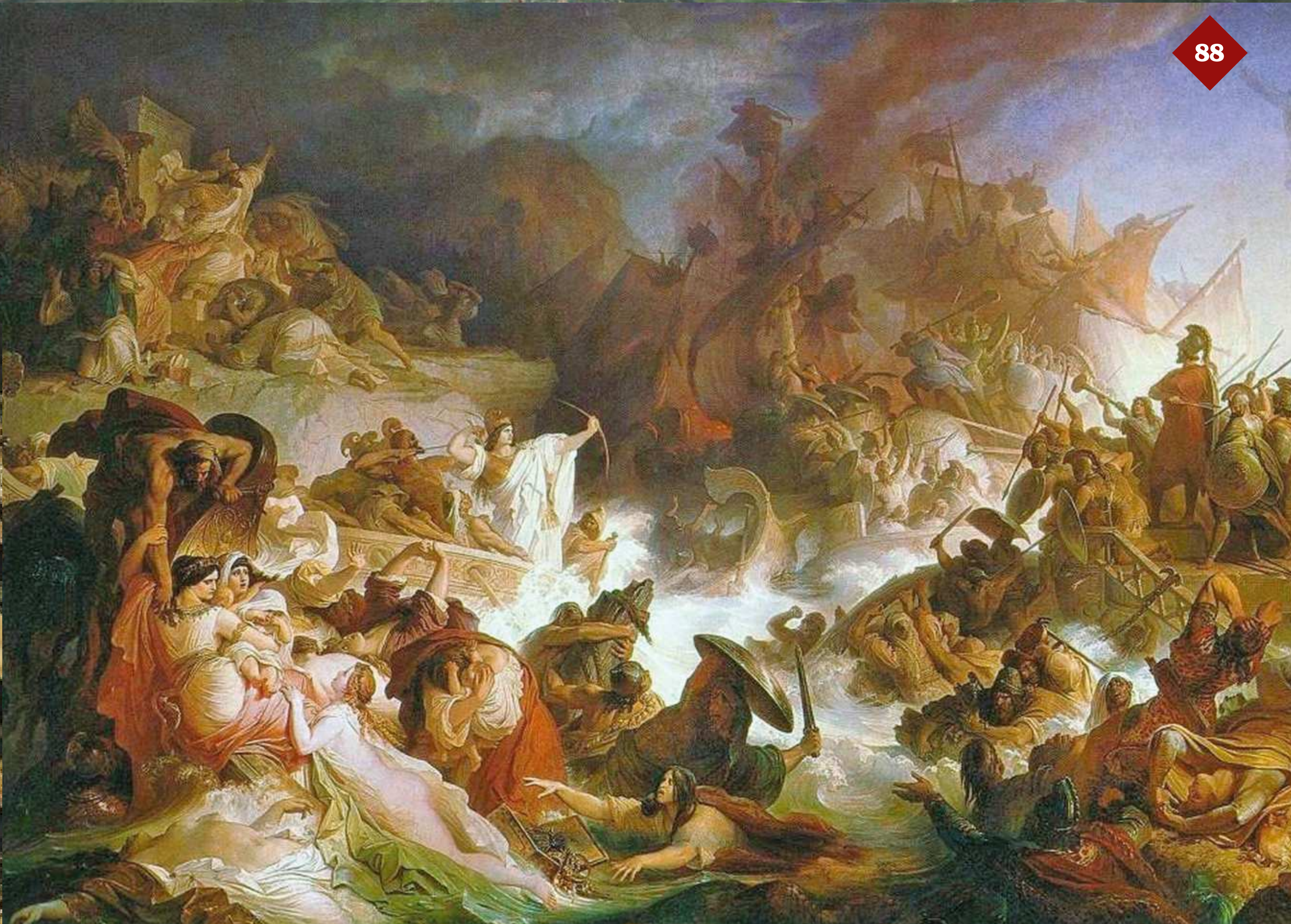

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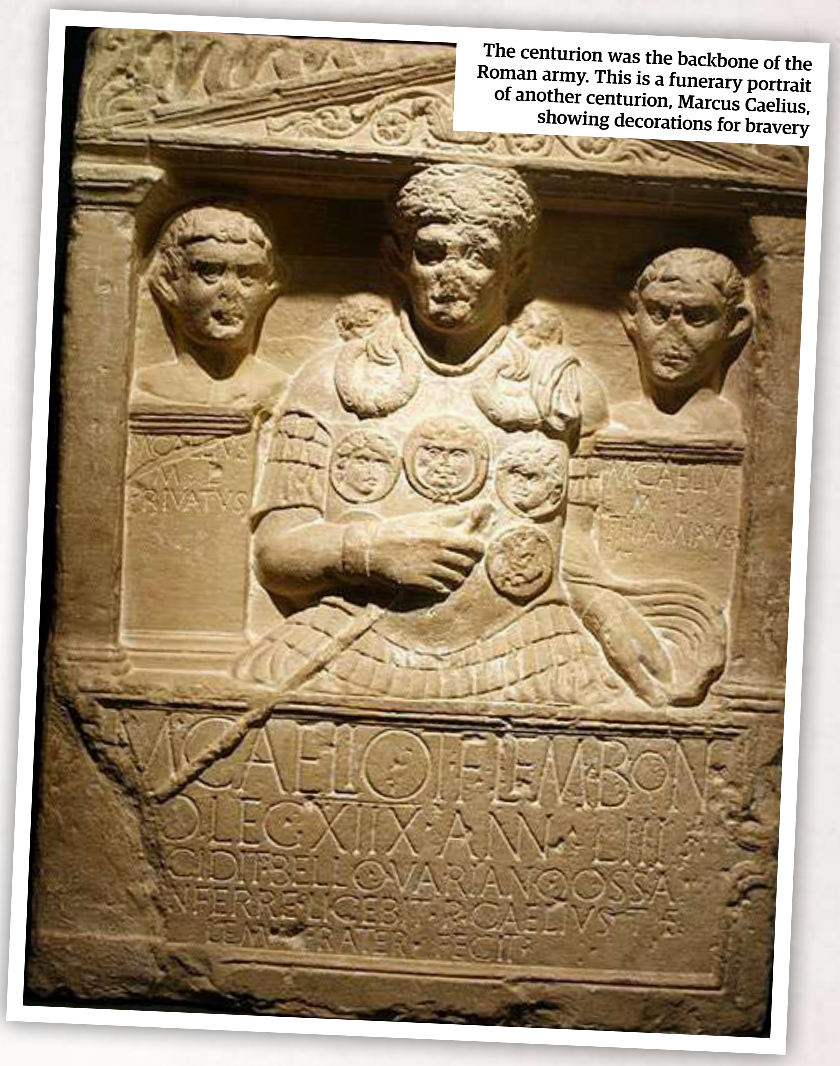
BRAVEST BATTLERS

Written by Murray Dahm

FROM BRAVING THE SPEARS AND ARROWS OF THE ENEMY TO FACING BULLETS AND MACHINES OF WAR, HISTORY IS FULL OF COURAGEOUS WARRIORS WHO LOOKED DEATH IN THE EYE AND FOUGHT ON TO THE END

Throughout the history of warfare there have been countless brave deeds performed by warriors of all cultures and nations. The societies from which those warriors come have always found ways to recognise and reward acts of bravery, a way to mark out their most courageous men. From dedicatory statues, crowns and the phalera of Rome's legionaries to medieval prizes and the medals of today, societies have sought ways to show they honour their soldiers' sacrifices. What follows here is a selection of history's boldest battlers, from a hero of ancient Greece to a sharpshooter of the French Foreign Legion.



The centurion was the backbone of the Roman army. This is a funerary portrait of another centurion, Marcus Caelius, showing decorations for bravery

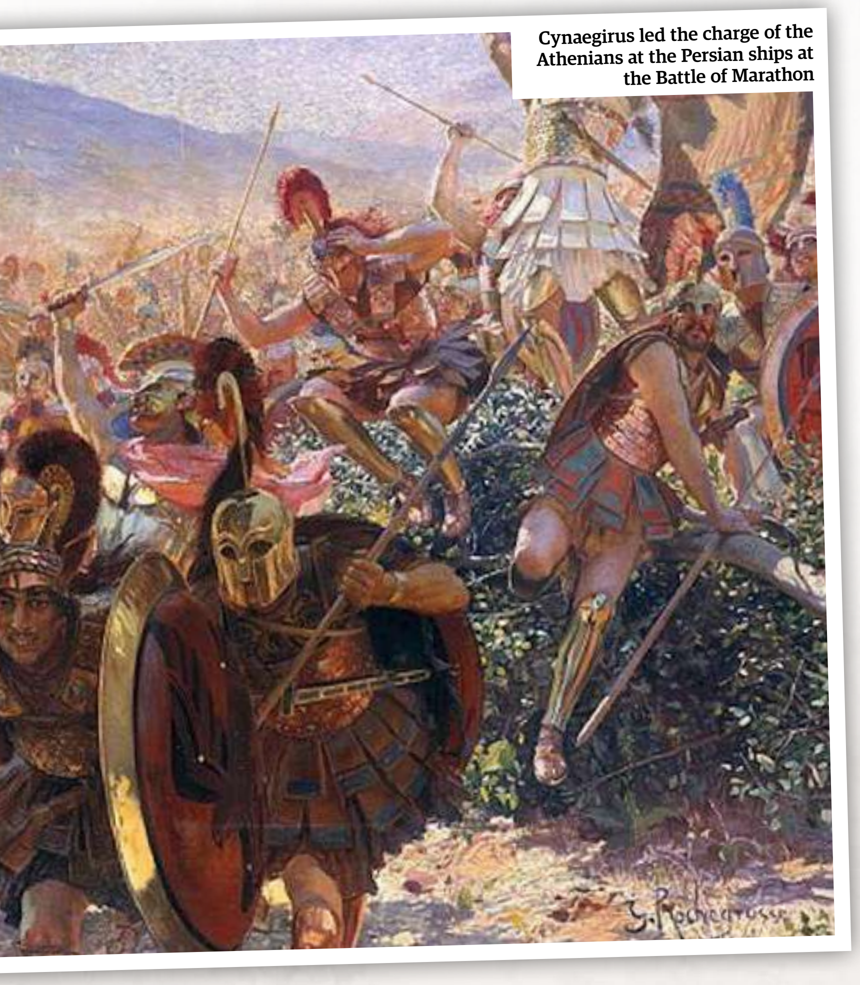
CASSIUS SCAEVA

c.90-c.48 BCE

Eighth Cohort, Sixth Legion, Roman Republic (Julius Caesar)

When Julius Caesar was fighting the civil war with Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Pompey the Great) for control of the Roman Republic, their battles took them all over the empire and eventually to Greece and the town of Dyrrachium. There, Caesar had a ring of small forts built to encircle Pompey even though Caesar's men were outnumbered and stretched thin. One of the forts was manned by a single cohort of the Sixth Legion (known as Ferrata, or the 'Iron Legion') consisting of about 480 men. One of the commanders of the Eighth Cohort was the centurion Cassius Scaeva.

Pompey attempted to break out of Caesar's encirclement and attacked the undermanned positions. Scaeva's cohort held off the attacks of four of Pompey's legions, or almost 20,000 men, for several hours. At the end of the day's fighting, the cohort still held the fort even though almost every man was wounded (130,000 enemy arrows were later collected from the battle site). Scaeva, who fought in the doorway to the fort, had lost an eye and was wounded in his shoulder and thigh. His shield was scarred by 120 holes from enemy missiles and was brought to Caesar as proof of his deeds once the fighting was over. Caesar promptly rewarded Scaeva with a vast cash prize and promoted him to the prestigious First Cohort of the Legion.



Cynaegirus led the charge of the Athenians at the Persian ships at the Battle of Marathon

CYNAEGIRUS, SON OF EUPHORION

c.525-490 BCE

Athens

In September 490 BCE, an army of 60,000 Persian soldiers landed northeast of Athens at the Bay of Marathon. They intended to restore the tyrant Hippias to power and overthrow the city's fledgling democracy. Athens summoned every man to fight against the invader - 10,000 citizen hoplites. It also sent to Sparta and other cities for help. In the end, however, only the small city of Plataea replied, sending every man it could - 1,000 in all. Together these 11,000 men faced an overwhelming Persian horde.

Persian tactics were to shoot an ineffable number of arrows at their enemies, break them and then pursue them as they fled. The Greeks, better armed and armoured than the Persians, decided that they would run at the Persians and close with them as quickly as possible in a bid to deprive them of the time they required to unleash their shower of arrows. The ploy worked; the Persians could not withstand the charge of the Athenians and broke themselves, fleeing back to their ships. The Athenians pursued and first among them was Cynaegirus. He reached the Persian ships first and seized the prow of one to prevent it disembarking. He had his hand cut off by a Persian axe and died on the beach. His outstanding bravery was commemorated in a public painting in Athens and lauded for centuries afterwards.

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·PAVLI·VGIELLI·OPVS·

John Hawkwood's funerary monument in the Duomo of Florence shows the esteem in which he was held by the city

JOHN HAWKWOOD

c.1323–1394

English mercenary

John Hawkwood became one of the most legendary (or most notorious) soldiers of fortune in the 14th century. A second son, Hawkwood began his military career as a longbowman in the English Army at Crécy in 1346, and he fought again at Poitiers in 1356. He was knighted at some point but it is not clear when or by whom. After Poitiers, Hawkwood joined a company of mercenaries, the White Company. With these he campaigned in Champagne, Burgundy and Avignon before moving into Italy and fighting in a series of bitter wars. He was elected commander of the company in 1363 and he commanded the army of Pisa in the Pisan-Florentine War of 1364–65. He then fought for the Milanese Visconti family against the Papal forces in 1372.

Hawkwood showed tactical awareness and a use of terrain unusual for the day, outflanking enemies of superior numbers. He mounted a great raid on Tuscany, which led to war between Florence and the pope in which he fought against Florence. Hawkwood exceeded his own expectations, capturing Città di Castello. Unpaid by the pope, Hawkwood later switched sides and began to fight for Milan and Florence. He ended his career as a legendary soldier defending Florence, leading an army to victory at the Battle of Castagnaro in 1387 at the age of 64.

MICHEL NEY

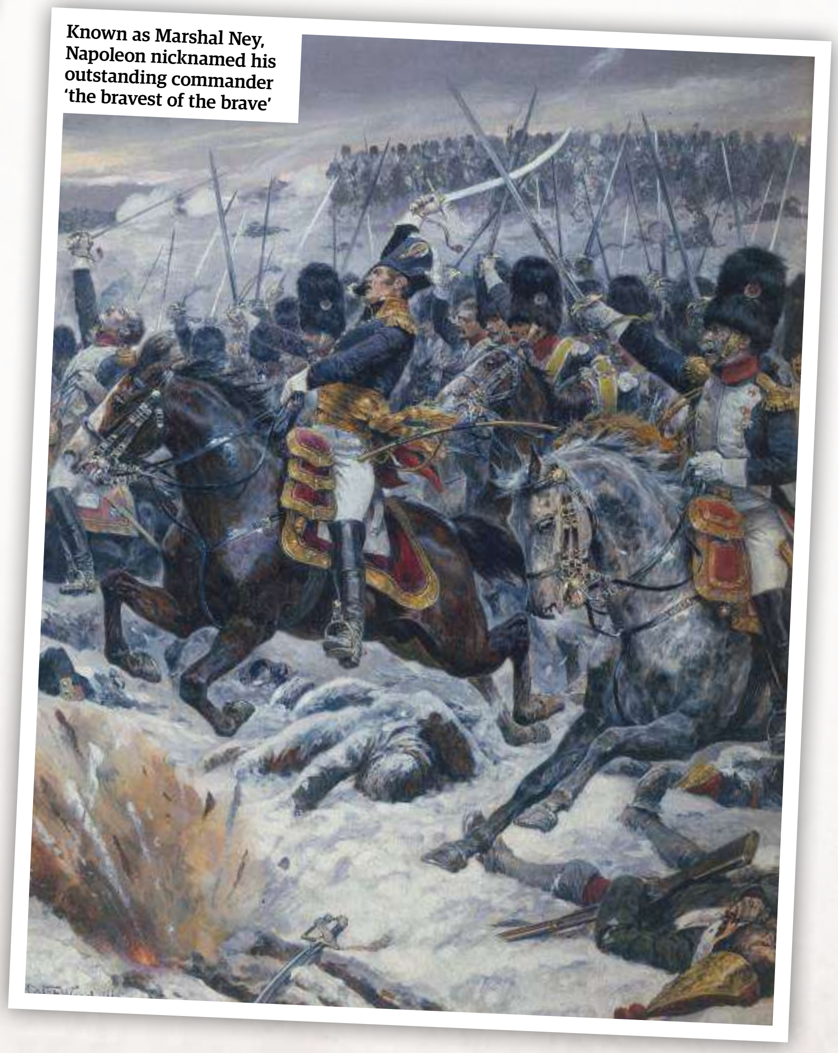
1769–1815

Kingdom of France and French Empire

Ney enlisted as a hussar in 1787, rapidly rising through the ranks despite his non-aristocratic birth. He was commissioned as an officer in 1792 and led his cavalry formations from the front in several battles. He was wounded various times and captured (although later exchanged for a man of much higher rank).

In 1804 he became a marshal, the Napoleonic distinction for those of the highest rank. In 1807 Ney rescued Napoleon from defeat at Eylau, as always leading his cavalry with reckless courage. With the future emperor impressed by Ney's ability, he was given a command post in Spain. Unfortunately for Ney, he was also given the 'honour' of leading III Corps during the doomed invasion of Russia in 1812. During the snow-covered debacle that this mammoth campaign became, Ney personally commanded the rear guard of the French retreat and held up the pursuing Russians on several occasions to allow more French troops to escape. He was known as the last Frenchman on Russian soil.

Ney continued to command in the campaigns of 1813 and 1814, suffering several wounds. Joining with Napoleon when the latter landed in France in 1815 following his flight from Elba, Ney became Napoleon's right-hand man, charged with leading the army tasked with capturing Quatre Bras (which he failed to do) and commanding the left wing at Waterloo. Ney's massed cavalry charges at Waterloo failed to win the battle for Napoleon, yet despite having five horses shot out from under him he fought to the end. In the aftermath of Napoleon's final defeat, Ney found himself on the wrong side. He was executed by firing squad for treason by the restored monarchy on 7 December 1815. He refused to wear a blindfold and gave the order to fire himself.



Known as Marshal Ney, Napoleon nicknamed his outstanding commander 'the bravest of the brave'

Kearny was the image of fearless leadership, commanding from the front and facing death with immense courage

PHILIP KEARNY

1815–1862

United States Army

Philip Kearny obtained a commission in the cavalry in 1837 as a second lieutenant. After studying cavalry tactics in France in 1839, he fought with the French in Algiers and returned home in 1840. Kearny then served in the Mexican-American War in 1846, where he was promoted to captain. He led a cavalry charge at Churubusco in 1847, suffering a wound caused by grapeshot, an injury that saw his left arm amputated. Nonetheless, he was the first man to enter Mexico City in September 1847.

Moving to Paris, he joined the French Army in 1859 and fought in the Franco-Austrian War, but the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 saw him return home. Reluctantly appointed a brigadier general (because of his amputation), Kearny led his men from the front, wielding a sword and holding his reins in his teeth. He trained and commanded the First New Jersey Brigade and then an army corps. He often ignored orders to fall back and was known as 'Kearny the Magnificent'.

Kearny died during the Battle of Chantilly, and both sides mourned his demise. Described as a perfect soldier and the bravest man alive, Kearny drew praise from his peers, commanders and opponents, his derring-do and memorable catch phrases having inspired all around him.

GEROLAMO 'NINO' BIXIO

1821–1873

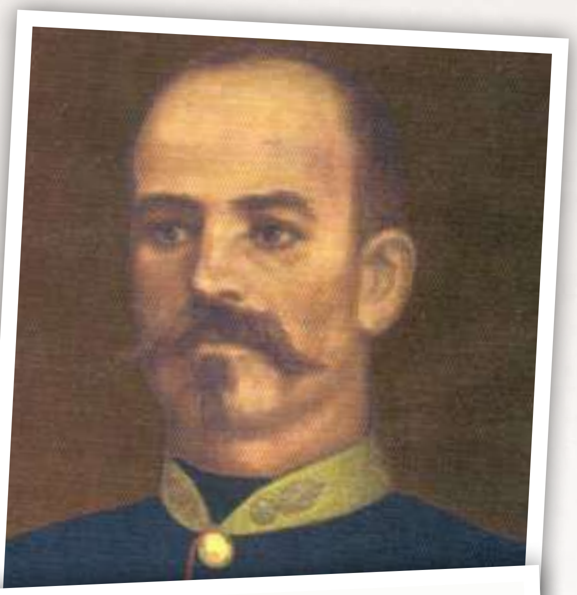
Kingdom of Sardinia and Kingdom of Italy

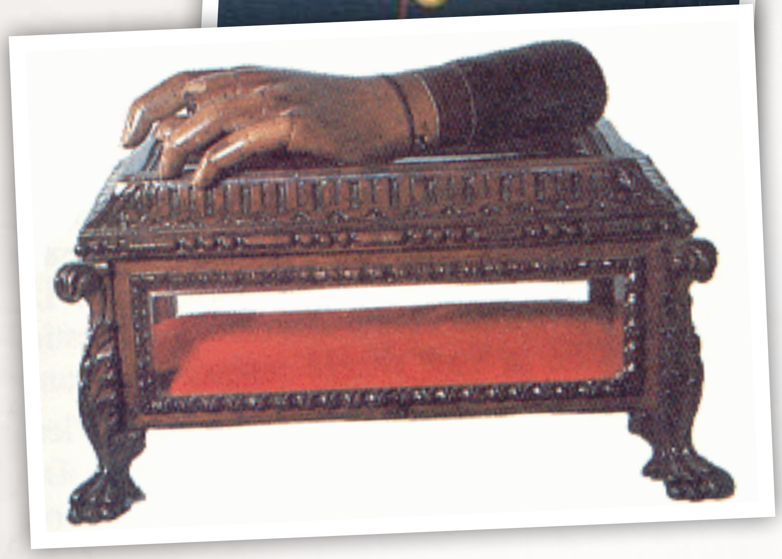
Born in Genoa, 'Nino' Bixio joined the Sardinian navy as a boy. Returning to Italy in his mid-20s, he immediately joined the Giovine Italia (Young Italy) movement and then signed up with Garibaldi's Red Shirts during the First War of Italian Independence in 1848.

Although the Italians were defeated by Austria and France, Bixio (promoted to captain) managed to capture an entire French battalion. This earned him a gold medal for valour. He was then appointed one of the commanders of Garibaldi's Cacciatori Delle Alpi ('Hunters of the Alps', predecessor of the elite Italian Alpine units) in the Second War of Italian Independence in 1859. At the Battle of Varese he won the Military Cross of Savoy for leading his battalion against the Austrians.

Bixio invaded Sicily with Garibaldi in 1860, proving invaluable at the Battle of Calatafimi and in conquering Sicily with remarkable speed. Returning to Italy, Bixio took part in the Battle of Volturno. There, Bixio was initially pushed back by Bavarian and Swiss troops but rallied and forced the enemy to retire. In doing so he broke his leg. He fought again in the Third War of Italian Independence in 1866 at the Battle of Custoza, covering the Italian retreat after their defeat and refusing the Austrian calls to surrender. He was also present for the capture of Rome in 1870 and the completion of the unification of Italy.

Bixio fought with Garibaldi's Red Shirts from 1848 until 1870, rising through the ranks to general





Captain Danjou's wooden hand has become a symbol of the virtues and qualities of the French Foreign Legion

JEAN DANJOU

1828-1863

French Foreign Legion

Jean Danjou graduated from France's most prestigious military academy (Saint-Cyr) in 1848. Within a few years he transferred to the French Foreign Legion, joining in 1852 and campaigning in Algeria, where he lost his hand in a musket explosion. He made himself a wooden prosthetic and continued to serve, campaigning at the Siege of Sevastopol during the Crimean War. Promoted to captain, he next served in the Franco-Austrian War and in Morocco before joining the French expedition to Mexico in 1862 as quartermaster.

In April 1863, Danjou decided to accompany an important convoy with two officers and 62 legionnaires. The convoy set off early on 30 April but after marching 24 kilometres it was attacked by a force of 2,000 Mexican soldiers at about 7am. Danjou's small command formed square and repulsed the enemy charges. Danjou then moved to a nearby inn, the Hacienda Camarón, as it was a better defensive position. A demand for surrender was refused, and Danjou made the men under his command swear they would not yield. Each man vowed that they would fight on. They were true to their oath.

The numerically superior enemy continued to launch attack after attack. Danjou was shot and killed but his men fought on. By 6pm, the last five men were down to their last cartridge. However, instead of dishonouring their fallen commander they charged the enemy with bayonets. Awed by their show of bravery, the Mexicans ceased fire and allowed the five men to form an honour guard around Captain Danjou's body.

ADRIAN CARTON DE WIART

1880-1963

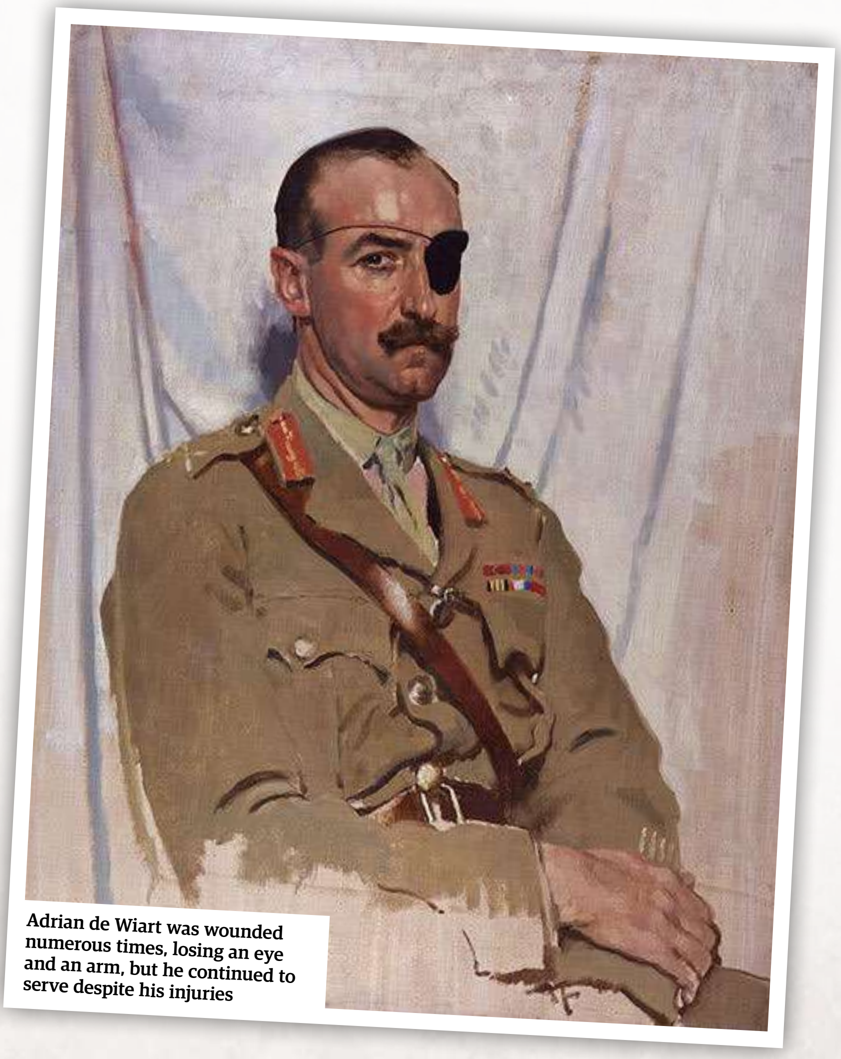
British Army

Of Belgian and Irish heritage, Adrian de Wiart left Oxford University to join the army in time for the Second Boer War in 1899. He enlisted under a false name and age, signing up as 'trooper Carton,' 25 - he was not yet 20. Wounded and sent home, he stayed in the army and recovered enough to rejoin and return to South Africa. He continued on in the army in the new century and climbed the ranks to captain.

The outbreak of World War I saw him seconded to the Camel Corps in British Somaliland, where he attacked an enemy fort at Shimber Berris. There he was shot twice in the face, losing his left eye. He was duly awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

In early 1915 he embarked for France, fighting at the Somme, Arras, Cambrai and Passchendale. He was injured seven times (including losing his left hand and being shot through the skull, hip, ankle, leg and ear - remarkably he continued to command despite each wound). He was awarded the Victoria Cross for actions at La Boiselle in July 1916, where he took command of three battalions in addition to his own (their officers had been wounded). He pressed home the attack of all battalions and constantly exposed himself to enemy fire as he calmly ensured that everything was done according to his orders.

He continued to serve, this time in Poland, where he stayed (the German invasion of 1939 thrust him back into service as a colonel). Next he saw action in Norway and Yugoslavia. Made a prisoner of war at age 61, de Wiart escaped at the fifth attempt but was recaptured. He was later involved in Italy's negotiations to withdraw from the war.



Adrian de Wiart was wounded numerous times, losing an eye and an arm, but he continued to serve despite his injuries

Albert Jacka became an instant national hero when he was awarded his Victoria Cross

ALBERT JACKA

1893-1932

Australian Imperial Force

Born in the state of Victoria, Albert Jacka enlisted as a private in the Australian Imperial Force in September 1914. Arriving in Egypt in early 1915, he joined the Australian and New Zealand Division and fought in the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, where he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

He was the lone guard at one end of the line, known as Courtney's Post, when the Turkish forces assaulted it on 19 May. Jacka fired warning shots until he could be reinforced by more men from his unit. He then climbed out into no-man's land alone and attacked the Turks from the flank. He shot five of the enemy and bayoneted two more, forcing the remainder to flee back to their own lines. Jacka then held the trench alone for the rest of the night. As the first Australian Victoria Cross of World War I, Jacka instantly became a national celebrity. He was promoted to corporal then sergeant and continued to serve.

Jacka moved with the division to the Western Front in 1916, seeing action near Pozières, where he was awarded the Military Cross. He received a Bar to his Military Cross in 1917 for an action near Bullecourt where he led a reconnaissance party into no-man's land to inspect the enemy defences and then returned to lay out the tapes for the Allied attack in the morning.

CHARLES UPHAM

1908-1994

New Zealand Military Forces

Charles Upham volunteered with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in September 1939 soon after the outbreak of World War II. He had already been a sergeant in New Zealand's Territorial Army but signed on as a private and was reluctant to go through officer training, which was offered to him several times. He finally did so in Egypt before his unit was sent to Greece.

Withdrawing from Greece to Crete in March 1941, Lieutenant Upham oversaw the safe extraction of Allied units and was awarded his first Victoria Cross in recognition of his fearless actions. Armed only with a pistol and some grenades, Upham had led his platoon forward unsupported at Maleme and personally took out various machine gun nests. He was wounded several times but remained on the line to oversee the withdrawal despite also suffering from dysentery throughout.

His citation describes his dash, courage and complete disregard for danger, which served to inspire the troops around him. Evacuating to Egypt, Upham dedicated his Victoria Cross to his men. He was then involved in the First Battle of El Alamein, where he was awarded a Bar to his Victoria Cross for leading an assault where he personally took out enemy positions and a tank, once again leading bravely despite suffering two new wounds. Worried about awarding a second Victoria Cross to the same man, commanders were assured Upham had earned it several times over.

Charles Upham is the only combat soldier to be awarded the Victoria Cross twice

SIMON FRASER, 15TH LORD LOVAT

1911–1995

United Kingdom

Simon Fraser joined the Oxford University cavalry squadron and then the Territorial Lovat Scouts in 1930. Continuing on into the Scots Guards, in 1932 he became Lord Lovat and then head of the Fraser Clan. By 1939 he had resigned his commission, but with war imminent he became a captain in the Lovat Scouts. In 1940 he volunteered to join the new commando units that were being formed.

In March 1941, Lord Lovat participated in an assault on the Norwegian archipelago of Lofoten, and later he was placed in command of 150 men for an attack on Hardelot, France, in April 1941. For the latter raid he received the Military Cross.

In August 1942, Lord Lovat again commanded No 4 Commando during manoeuvres in Dieppe. While the main raid was a disaster, Lord Lovat's part of the mission was an immense success, destroying six guns and extracting most of his men, a triumph for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. Yet such incidents of bravery were not isolated; he led his men calmly throughout the war.

With the coming of 1944 he was given a promotion to brigadier and command of the new 1st Special Service Brigade, which landed at Sword Beach on D-Day. Lord Lovat waded ashore with his men accompanied by bagpipes, revealing his disdain for the rulebook (an ordnance forbidding bagpipes had been issued). Their destination was the bridge over the Caen Canal known as Pegasus Bridge. Lord Lovat led his men to the objective, reaching it just behind schedule. He was wounded soon after on 12 June but returned to service to train new volunteers.

Lord Lovat commanded No 4 Commando at Dieppe and the 1st Special Service Brigade on D-Day

Stanley Hollis' Victoria Cross was the only one awarded to a soldier who fought on Gold Beach on D-Day

STANLEY HOLLIS

1912–1972

British Army, Green Howards

Hollis enlisted in the Territorials, Green Howards Regiment, in 1939, prior to the outbreak of World War II. He went to France and was evacuated at Dunkirk, being promoted to sergeant soon after. He then fought with the Eighth Army in Africa at El Alamein and continued on to the invasion of Sicily in 1943. His able service saw him recommended for the Distinguished Service Medal. By that time he was the company sergeant major.

When the Green Howards landed on Gold Beach on D-Day, Hollis took part in several brave actions for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. After landing under heavy fire, Hollis noticed two pillboxes. He rushed them both alone, spraying his Sten gun in 'hosepipe' fashion. Hollis recalled that this must have panicked the Germans; he took multiple prisoners, 26 from the second pillbox alone. Throughout the day he 'appeared wherever the fighting was heaviest', showing gallantry and leadership and saving the lives of many of his men throughout the day. Hollis was wounded during his exploits but continued to lead his platoon, its lieutenant having been killed. He was evacuated back to England after D-Day to recover from his wounds.

AUDIE MURPHY

1925–1971

United States Army

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Audie Murphy faked his age (he was only 16) in order to enlist. Being small in stature he was rejected from every branch but was eventually able to enlist in the United States Army. (Later, when he starred in the movie of his exploits, *To Hell and Back*, General Eisenhower expressed doubt that an actor so small could have done the things the soldier was meant to have done - he was then told that the 'actor' was Murphy himself.)

First seeing action during the invasion of Sicily in 1943, Murphy later participated in the actions around Anzio, earning his first bravery award (the Bronze Star) for taking out a tank alone with rifle-grenades. Landing in southern France in 1944, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for advancing alone against an enemy-held house with a machine gun, killing six and taking 11 prisoners.

He continued to perform gallant actions and in January 1945 was awarded the Medal of Honor when he mounted an abandoned M10 tank destroyer alone and took on an advancing enemy force for over an hour, killing or wounding more than 50 of them despite being injured himself. He only fell back when he ran out of ammunition.

Audie Murphy was the United States' most decorated soldier in WWII

Adjutant-chef Alex Rowe is one of the French Foreign Legion's most decorated legionnaires and the first British member to receive France's highest award, the Légion d'honneur

ALEX ROWE

1966–

French Foreign Legion

Refused admission to the British Army on medical grounds when aged 17, Rowe joined the French Foreign Legion when he turned 20 in 1986. Despite the eye condition that kept him out of the British Army, Rowe trained as a sniper. He served in Chad and as part of UN forces in Sarajevo in the 1990s.

In Sarajevo he received his first citation for bravery, shepherding a mother and her child to safety under sniper fire. Rowe then saw action elsewhere in Bosnia and in Kosovo. He was sent to the Ivory Coast in 2003 as part of a United Nations force deployed during the county's civil war before serving two tours in Afghanistan (in 2008 and 2009).

Rowe has received five citations for bravery in his 23 years of service in the Legion (a unique honour), the last coming in 2010 for an airborne insertion in 2009 where the force was ambushed in the middle of the night and Adjutant-chef Rowe co-ordinated a counter-attack and the evacuation of wounded amid the confusion of night-time combat.

Much of Rowe's career is shrouded in mystery due to the Legion's policy of secrecy, but he is still serving. His unprecedented award in 2010 offered a fascinating insight into this humble soldier's remarkable exploits.

HISTORY'S SHARPEST SWORDSMEN

Written by Frances White

MIYAMOTO MUSASHI

1584–1645

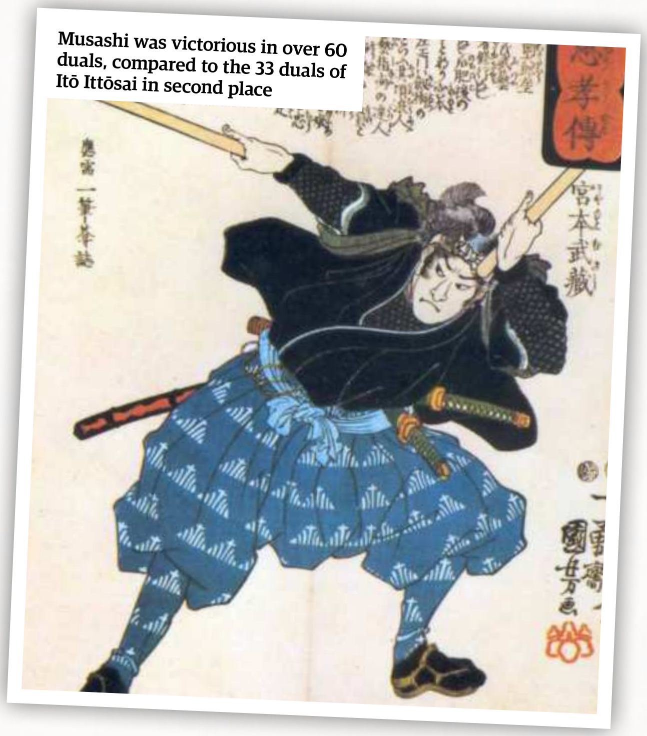
Japanese

Few swordsmen in history are revered as much as the samurai of ancient Japan, and to this day Musashi is regarded as the finest samurai to ever live.

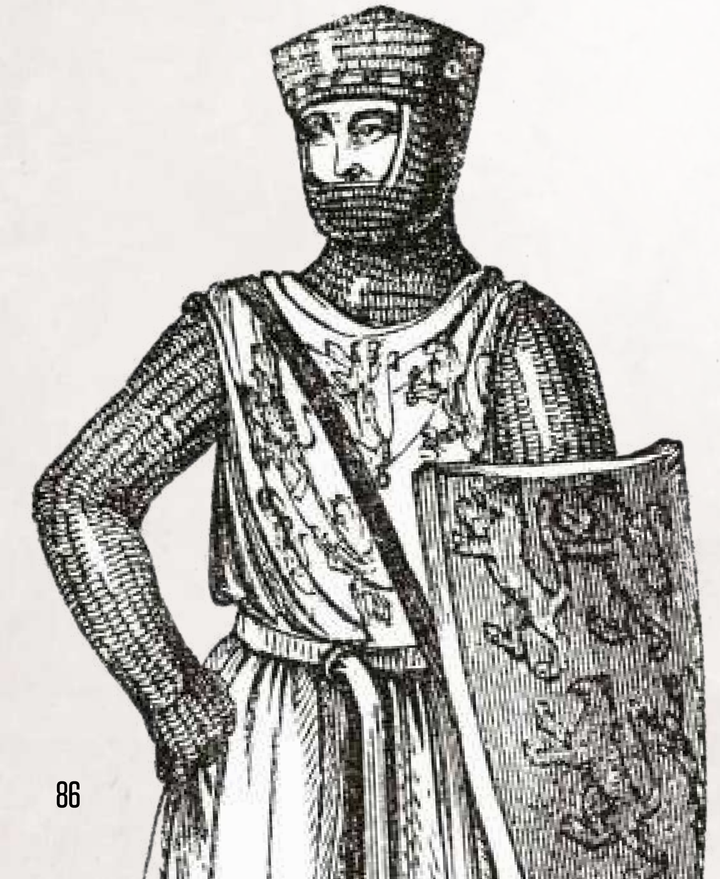
Musashi's childhood is shrouded in mystery, but by the time the boy was seven years old he was being raised by his uncle in a Buddhist temple. It was either here that he learned his swords skills or with his father, but one thing we do know is that Musashi killed his first man aged just 13, winning his first duel of many.

At 16 he left the monastery and found himself caught up in the legendary Battle of Sekigahara. Unfortunately for Musashi he was on the losing side, leaving him as a master-less samurai, or rōnin.

Musashi wandered the land, pursuing a personal quest to perfect his own sword-fighting technique. He invented the nitō ichi-ryū, a style of fencing with two swords. He faced opponent after opponent in duel after duel (many to the death) and defeated them all, and his legendary status grew. It is said that Musashi fought in more that 60 sword fights, all of which he won. Whether this is true or not, the rōnin's legend lives on, and today he is regarded as a kensai, or 'sword saint'.



Musashi was victorious in over 60 duals, compared to the 33 duals of Itō Ittōsai in second place



WILLIAM MARSHAL

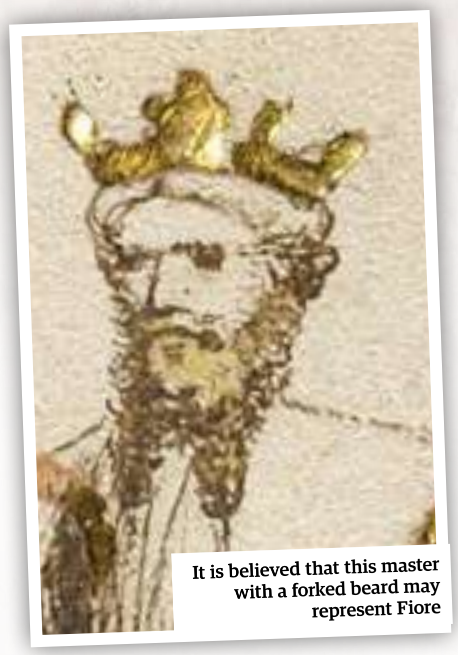
1146–1219

English

William Marshal is a very ordinary name for a man whose life was anything but. In fact, his story is so remarkable that he was the only non-royal of the Middle Ages to have a biography written about him.

Born the younger son to a minor house, he was sent to France aged just 12 to train for seven years in the art of being a knight. He began fighting in tournaments, where his skill earned him a living as well as celebrity status as one of the finest knights on the circuit. This caught the attention of the royal family, and William was appointed to the royal household. The knight's sword-fighting prowess and leadership became legendary, and he served five English kings: Henry II, the Young King Henry, Richard I, John and Henry III.

The tales of William's bravery and legend are numerous, including scaling the walls of a besieged castle aged 50, leading a royal army into battle at 70 and capturing over 500 knights over the breadth of his career. Upon his death he was invested into the Order of the Knights Templar, his place as one of history's greatest swordsmen secured.



It is believed that this master with a forked beard may represent Fiore

FIORE DEI LIBERI

1350-1409

Italian

One of the most significant figures of European martial arts history, Fiore dei Liberi was a master of fencing and credited as the father of Italian swordsmanship. He began training in martial arts at a young age and showed an immediate talent. He writes that he trained under many distinguished masters and many other 'false' ones, the latter of whom he was forced to duel for honour (duals he of course won).

With his training complete, Fiore travelled all over Italy teaching fencing and training a long roster of Condottieri (military leaders). There are many famous duels in history in which Fiore can be attributed to having trained at least one contender. He also served as court fencing master to Niccolò III d'Este, Marquis of Ferrara, Modena and Parma.

In the 15th century he composed *The Flower of Battle*, a fencing treatise that was used by many other fencing masters to form their own combat treatises. It is one of the oldest surviving fencing manuals and certainly one of the most extensive, proving to be hugely influential in developing the sport we know today.

SASAKI KOJIRŌ

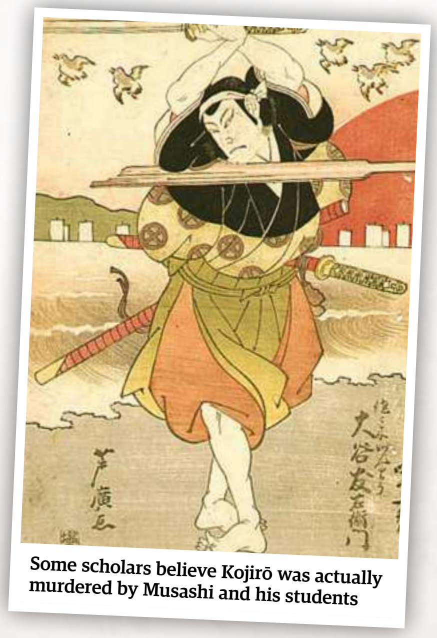
1585-1612

Japanese

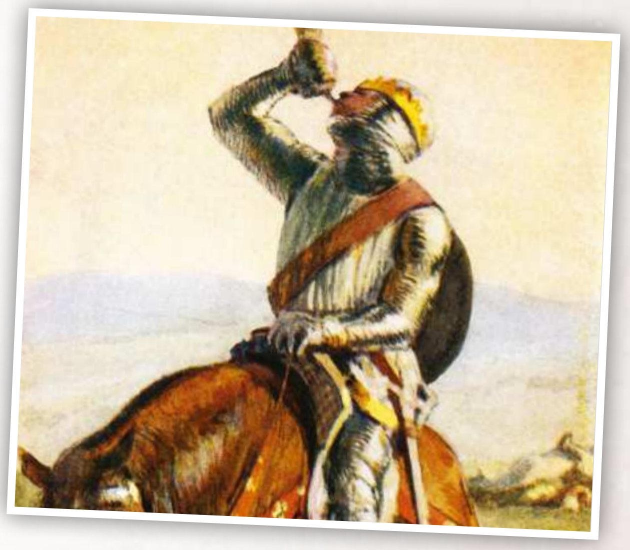
A list that features Miyamoto Musashi is incomplete without his greatest and most skilled rival, Sasaki Kojirō.

The details about Kojirō's early life, like many swordsmen, are unclear, and we are not even completely sure who his swordsmaster was. However, we do know that he fought with a nodachi (a long katana) and developed his skills to a level that exceeded that of his masters. He then left to found his own kenjutsu school known as the Ganryū, or 'large rock style'. His school quickly became famous, and his reputation as a skilled master grew. On one occasion he bested three opponents at the same time. His favourite technique was the 'turning shallow cut', a move that was so quick and precise it could - reportedly - cut down a bird in mid-flight.

One of his most famous (and ultimately his final) duels was against his arch rival Miyamoto Musashi. The clash was arranged to take place on a remote island, likely to stop Kojirō's students taking revenge if he was to lose. Details of the actual duel differ from source to source, but it is generally agreed that Musashi fashioned a sword out of one of the wooden oars of his boat. He then used this to strike Kojirō on the skull, killing him. Whether this is the true tale is hotly contested, but the duel between these two legendary warriors is one of the most monumental in history.



Some scholars believe Kojirō was actually murdered by Musashi and his students



COUNT ROLAND

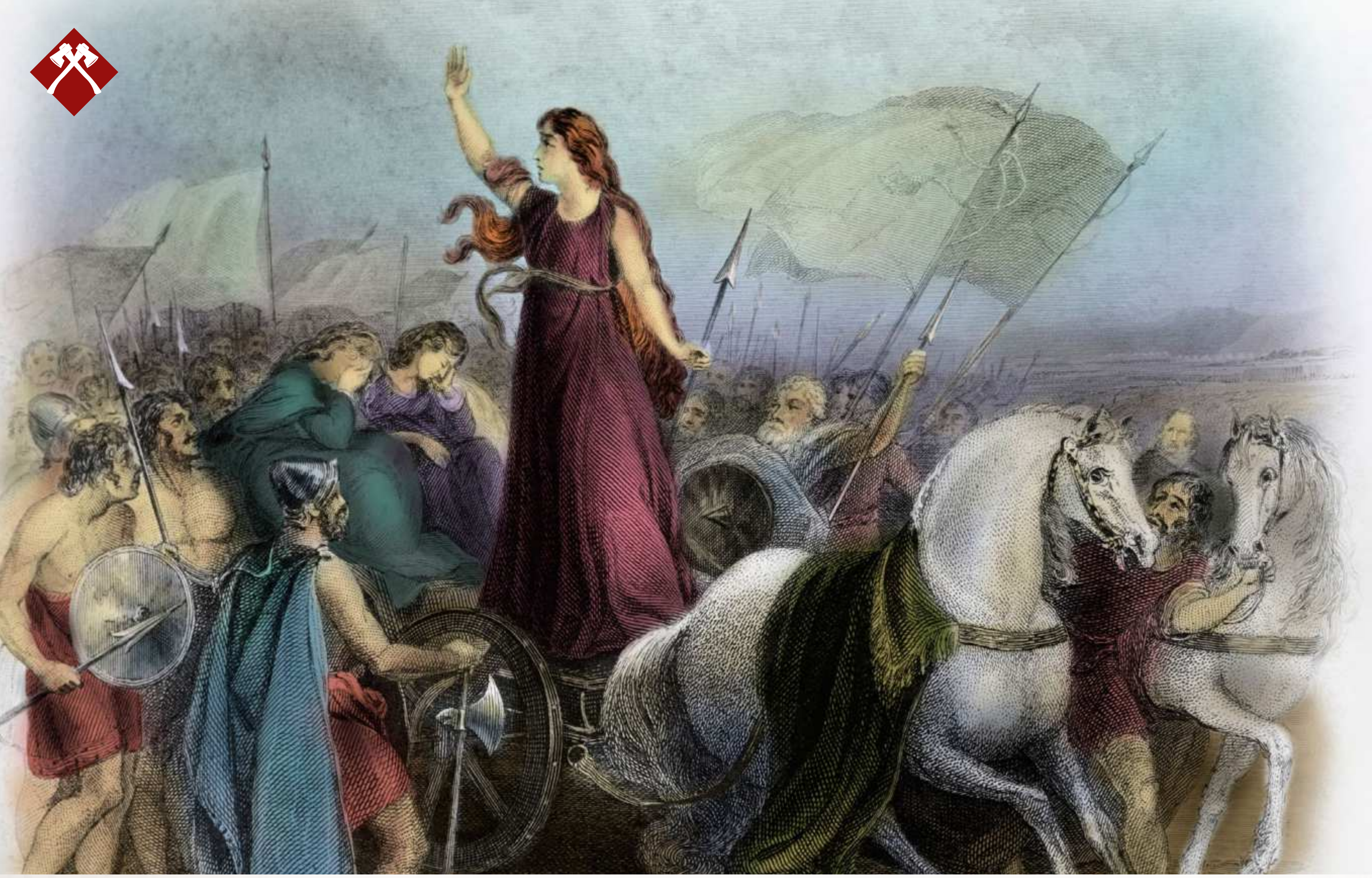
Unknown-778

Frankish

The tale of Roland has become legendary, but how much of it is based on actual historical fact is up for debate. We know from historical sources that he was a military governor in the Breton March and was killed by rebellious Basques in Iberia. His death (and legend) was immortalised in the medieval literary cycle The Matter of France.

In the myths, Roland is the nephew of Charlemagne and has an epic last stand and brutal fight to the death. In the battle, Roland is too proud to use his horn to summon aid, and thus the brave Franks are greatly outnumbered by their foes. Eventually they are overcome and defeated, with Roland tragically losing his life as a true Christian hero.

Over time the Roland myth developed and Roland himself transformed into a man who stood over two metres tall and carried a magical sword. Roland gradually became a symbol for independence from the nobility, and many cities in the Middle Ages displayed statues of the brave warrior, with some cities even named after him. Although we cannot know for sure just how heroic and skilled Roland really was, his legend certainly helped to inspire people for centuries after his death.



WARRIOR WOMEN

Written by Kate Marsh

MEET 12 WOMEN WHO FOUND THEIR WAY ONTO THE BATTLEFIELD AND PROVED THAT THEY BELONGED THERE

When it comes to war, men generally get all the glory. We are familiar with the tales of the heroic male pilots during the world wars, and we're well aware of Alexander the Great's ruthlessness as he swept across Eastern Europe, the Middle East and as far as India. But fighting has never just been a man's game.

Throughout history, women have formed part of the battle line, swords or guns at the ready, just like Grace O'Malley. Women have climbed into cockpits, ready to take out the enemy, like the Russian Night Witches in World War II. But their contributions are often forgotten, overlooked in favour of the multitude of men who they fought alongside.

It's time to meet some of the female fighters who are long overdue recognition for their services and sacrifices. Some are names we all know, some seem to have disappeared over time, but all fought for their countries, their homes and themselves. From all corners of the globe and from all walks of life, they have shaped the world that we know today, and they all have their own stories to tell. No two are the same, but they all have one thing in common: a fighting spirit.

Among her accomplishments, Fu Hao ended a war with the Tu Fang that had raged for generations

FU HAO

Unknown-c.1200 BCE

Shang Dynasty

Wife, mother, consort, shaman, politician, military leader - Fu Hao broke the mold. Married to King Wu Ding, one of the greatest Shang rulers in ancient China, Fu Hao enjoyed a life that not many contemporary women could even have contemplated. By order of the king she would conduct rituals and sacrifices, which was something usually undertaken by men, but it was with weapons that she would forge her reputation.

Competing tribes lay all around Shang territory; there were the Tu, the Ba, the Yi and the Qiang. Fu Hao fought them all. Sometimes she would find her own soldiers to take with her; other times her husband would assemble them for her - every time she would wage war and then return.

For instance, after generations of warfare against the Tu Fang, Fu Hao took them down in one battle. Furthermore, her fight against the Ba saw the earliest recorded ambush in Chinese history. Her tomb is that of a royal warrior, and rightly so, with over 100 weapons including battle axes among the 2,000 jade, bronze, bone and stone items that were buried with her.

ARTEMISIA I OF CARIA

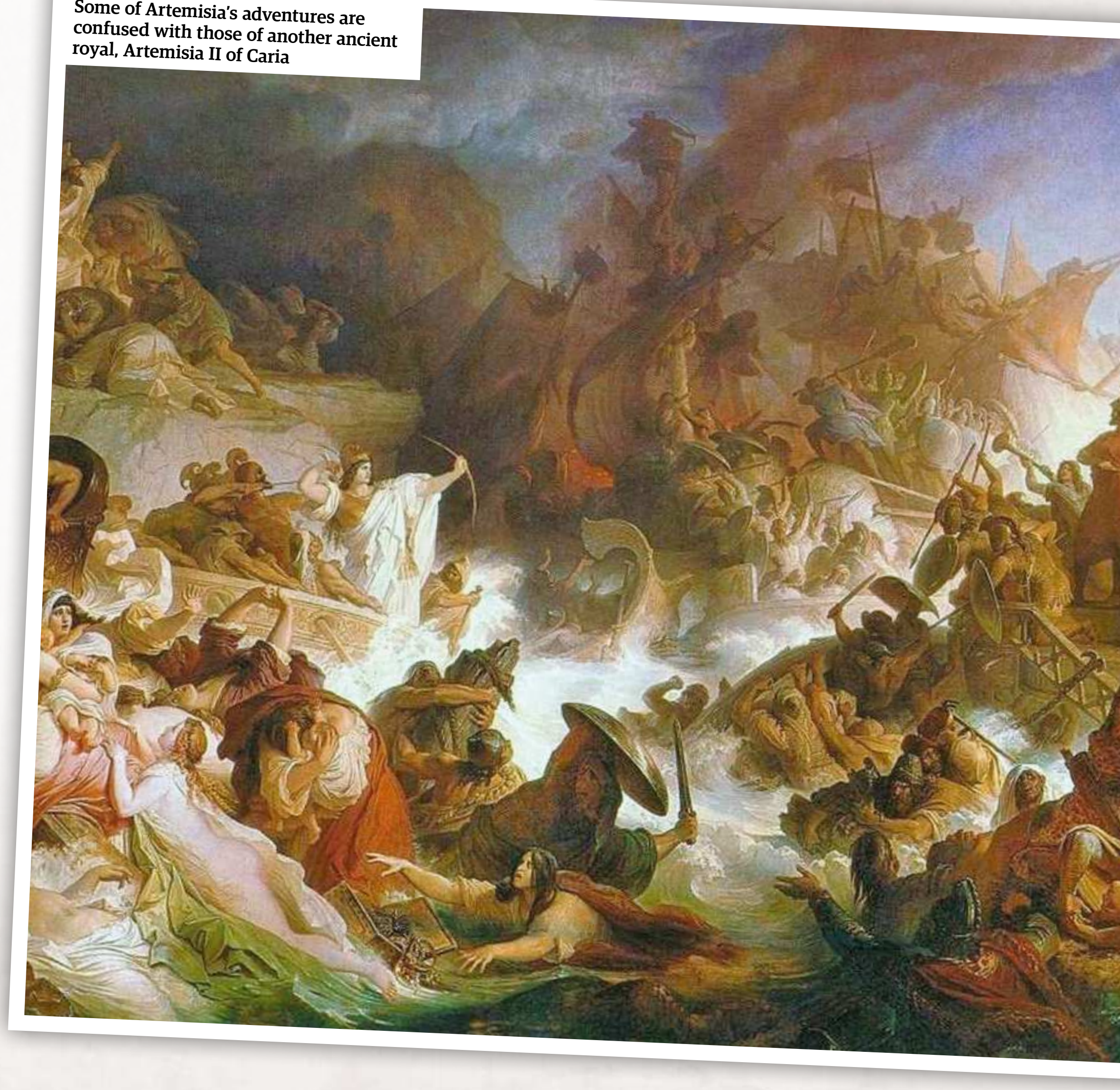
5th century BCE

Persian Empire

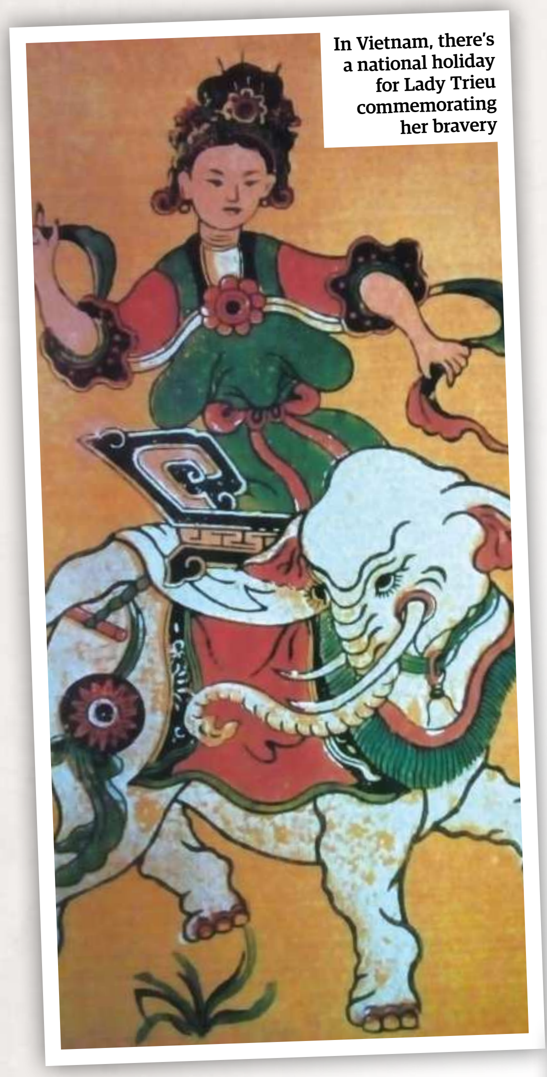
When King Lygdamis of Caria died, he left behind an heir in his grandson, but the young boy needed a regent. It was to be Lygdamis' daughter, Artemisia. No matter what the view of women in ancient Greece, the king had left his city in good hands - after all, she had been named after Artemis, the goddess of the hunt.

Everywhere Artemisia is mentioned by ancient authors she is hailed for her bravery and cunning, and her virtues are more than apparent in one of her most famous exploits. When the Persians invaded Greece in the late 5th century BCE, Caria was part of the Persian Empire and the queen's people were called up to fight. There was no reason for Artemisia to go with them, but she did.

At the Battle of Artemisium, the queen stood alongside her soldiers and proved herself as a commander and tactician - but it came at a cost. It was 10,000 drachmas, to be precise, for her capture or murder. It's unlikely that the Greeks ever captured her, but after Xerxes' withdrawal from Greece she disappears from the pages of history. Nonetheless, her reputation as a fierce fighter and tactician remain to this day.



Some of Artemisia's adventures are confused with those of another ancient royal, Artemisia II of Caria



In Vietnam, there's a national holiday for Lady Trieu commemorating her bravery

TRIÊU THI TRINH

225-248 CE

Vietnam

She was a girl with a reputation, and she was absolutely fine with that. Born in a small Vietnamese village and then orphaned when just a toddler, Triêu Thi Trinh, or Lady Triêu, wasn't one to stand for intolerance. When she saw how the Chinese forces occupying her home were treating the locals, she took action.

Fleeing to the mountains, Lady Triêu formed her own rebel army, training around 1,000 soldiers. By the time she was 21 they had fought more than 30 battles. She was eventually defeated by the Chinese, but her brother had tried to convince her to stop long before. Her response had been simple: "I will not resign myself to the lot of women who bow their heads and become concubines. I wish to ride the tempest, tame the waves, kill the sharks. I have no desire to take abuse."

PRINCESS PINGYANG

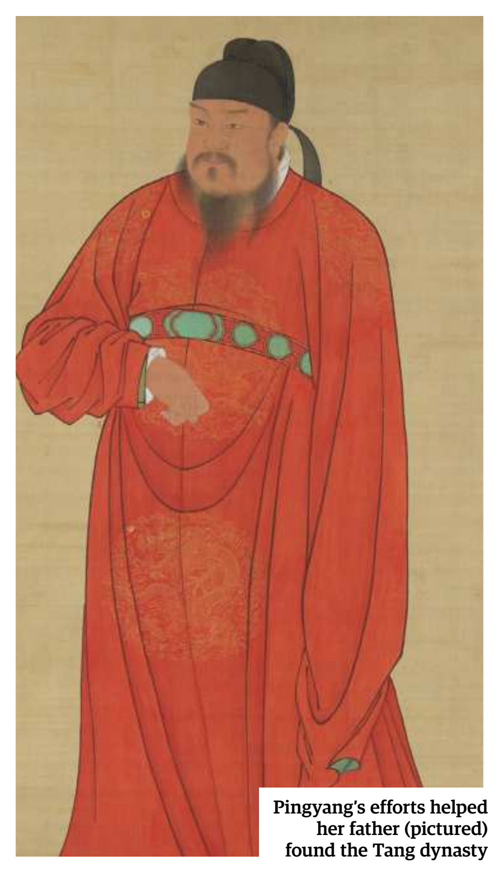
c.600-623 CE

Tang dynasty, China

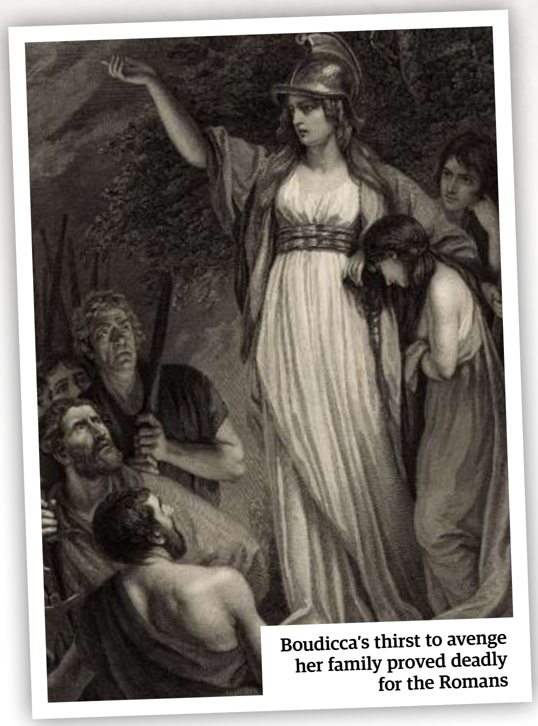
People hated the Sui Dynasty with its unnecessary wars and building projects that worked around 6 million people to death. Li Yuan was one of Emperor Yang's greatest generals, but he was popular - too popular to be kept around. The ruler ordered his execution and Li Yuan swiftly rose up.

His daughter Pingyang, wife of the head of the palace guard, had been forced to flee the capital. She headed to her father's side and there recruited men into a fighting force: the Army of the Lady. Through bribery and battle she came to command 70,000 rebels and continuously defeated Yang's armies. After joining up with her father and husband, she was unstoppable. Within a year, the capital was under their control and the emperor was forced to flee only to be killed by his own men. Li Yuan took the throne as Emperor Gaozu, and the Tang dynasty was born, thanks in no small part to the actions of his daughter.

But Pingyang wouldn't revel in her victory for long. Just a few years later, aged about 23, she fell ill and died. Her father wouldn't forget everything she had done though, and the princess and marshall was given a full military funeral.



Pingyang's efforts helped her father (pictured) found the Tang dynasty



Boudicca's thirst to avenge her family proved deadly for the Romans

BOUDICCA

1st century CE

Iceni tribe

With Roman legions spilling across the English Channel and battling their way through Britannia, they probably didn't expect a woman to stand in their way. But then Boudicca wasn't the type to take an invasion lying down.

The Celtic Iceni tribe often found itself at war with its neighbours, but they united at the threat of the common enemy they found in the Romans. On the front lines was the recently widowed Queen Boudicca, and she had a score to settle. Her daughters had been captured by the foreign soldiers and raped, while other members of her family were snatched to become slaves. The Romans didn't realise that Boudicca would give absolutely everything to achieve revenge.

In 60/61 CE Boudicca and her allies stormed Camulodunum (Colchester), Londinium (London) and Verulamium (St Albans), slaughtering civilians and soldiers and burning buildings as they went. In a wanton act of disrespect, they broke tombstones and mutilated statues in Roman cemeteries. Initially paralysed by this sudden uprising, the Romans eventually composed themselves and formed a 10,000-strong force to stop the rebels.

Clashing at the Battle of Watling Street in 61 CE, the Celts gave the Romans a fight but eventually succumbed. Although she was on the front line in her war chariot with her daughters, Boudicca wasn't killed in the fighting - instead she took poison rather than be taken alive by the enemy.

KHAWLAH BINT AL-AZWAR

7th century

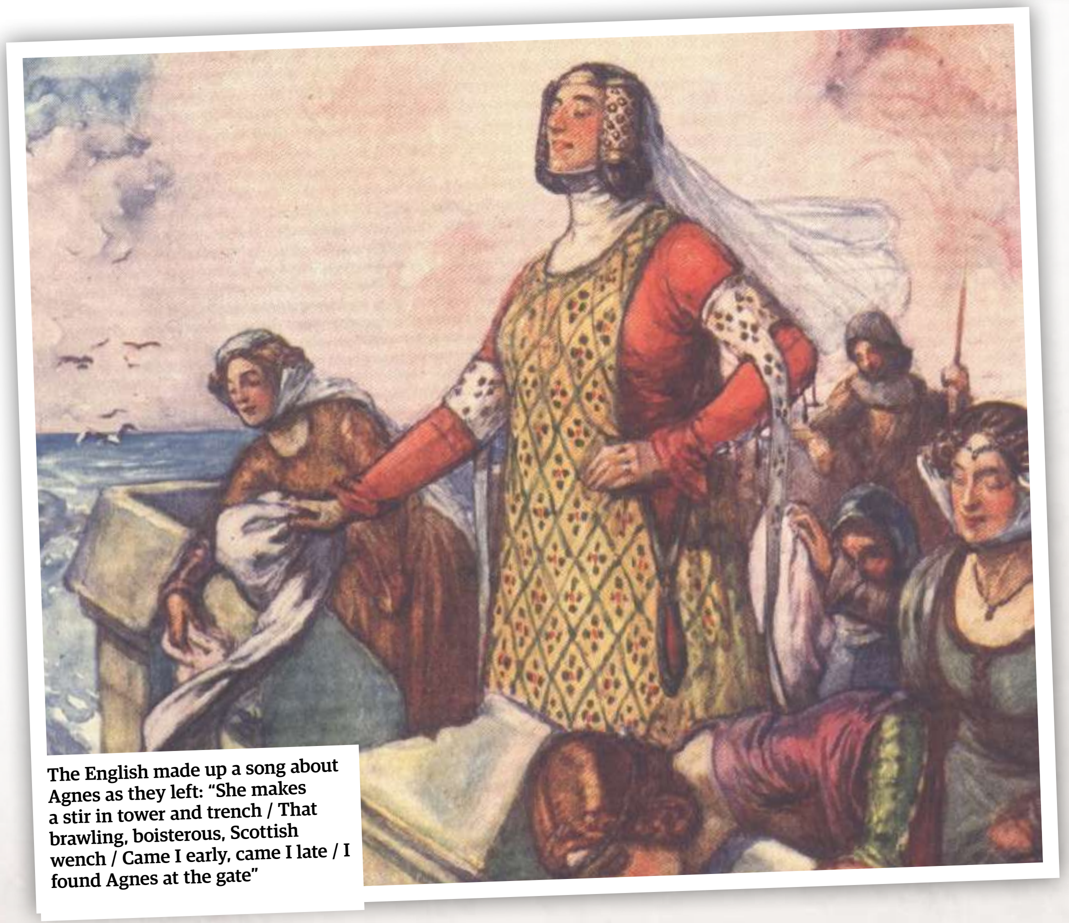
Rashidun Caliphate

At a battle near Ajnadayn, there was a knight who caught the eye of a group of soldiers. Dressed in black, the fighter broke through the Roman units and scattered them, blood dripping from their spear. It was assumed that it was Khalid ibn al-Walid, a brave and fierce soldier, but when the knight appeared next to the group it was clear that it wasn't him. So who was this mysterious warrior who had just helped to defeat the enemy?

It was Khawlah bint al-Azwar, a woman whose brother had been captured by the Romans. She had grown up mastering the art of swordsmanship and this had been her opportunity to put all that training to good use. She was invited to stay with the army and fight.

Another skirmish near Ajnadayn saw Khawlah and other women taken as prisoners, but she wasn't going to die weak and defenceless. Together with the other prisoners she attacked the guards using tent poles and pegs, with the group killing 30 in total. Escaping back onto the battlefield, they would contribute to the enemy's body count of 3,000 and Khawlah's name would go down in history.

A women's military training college in Abu Dhabi is named after Khawlah



The English made up a song about Agnes as they left: "She makes a stir in tower and trench / That brawling, boisterous, Scottish wench / Came I early, came I late / I found Agnes at the gate"

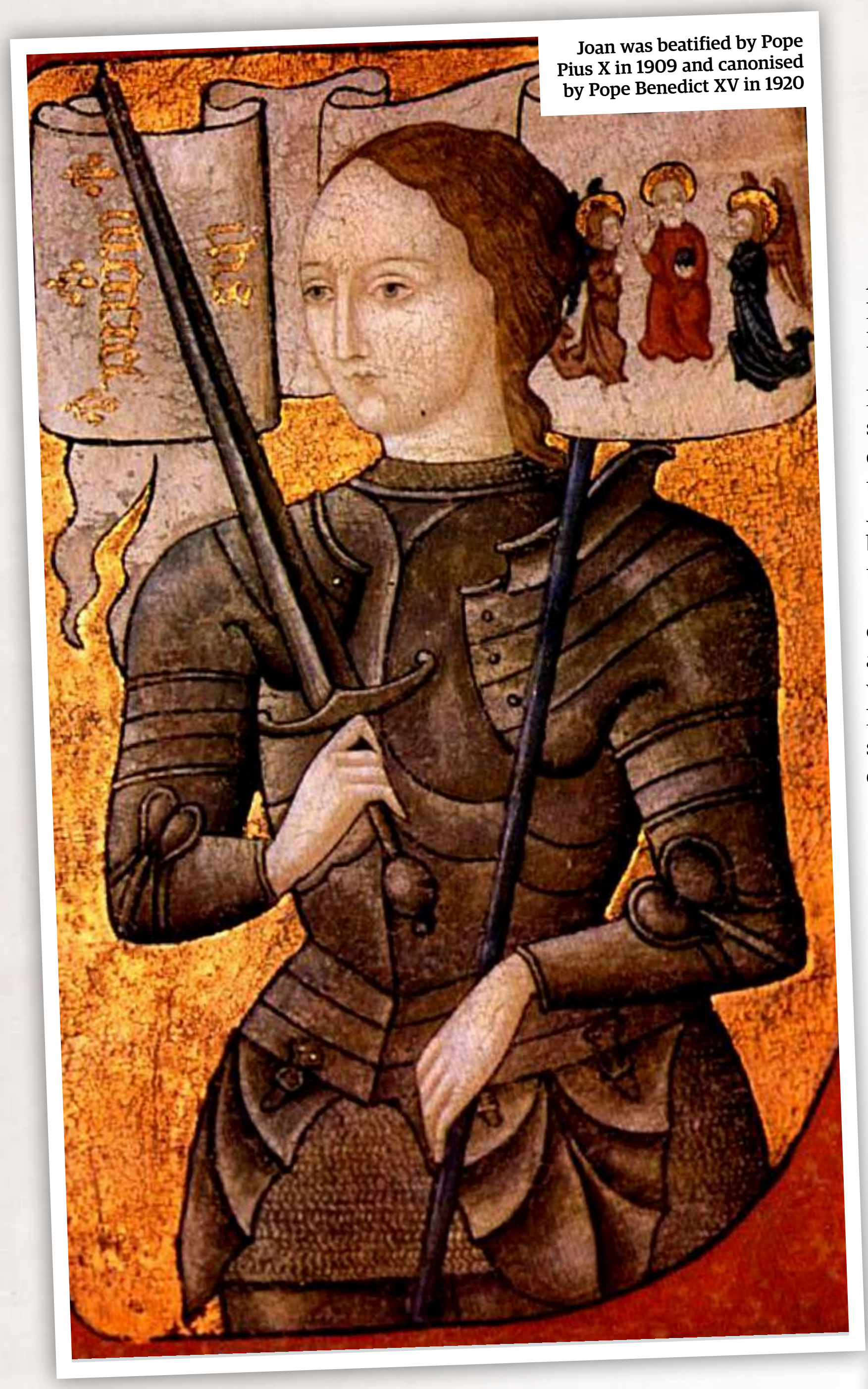
LADY AGNES RANDOLPH, COUNTESS OF MORAY

c.1312–1369

Scotland

The Countess of Moray was not a woman to be trifled with. When the English turned up at Dunbar Castle ready to take it by force in January 1338, they probably weren't expecting to be met by a noblewoman who had pledged to protect it.

As the English threw rocks at the walls, Lady Agnes Randolph had her maids sent out to dust and clean the marks on the stone with white handkerchiefs. When a battering ram was used, she ordered large boulders to be dropped on the soldiers' heads. When they threatened to kill her captured brother, she pointed out that would make her the next Earl of Moray. Eventually, the English gave up and went home.



Joan was beatified by Pope Pius X in 1909 and canonised by Pope Benedict XV in 1920

JOAN OF ARC

c.1412–1431

France

A national hero, Joan of Arc is synonymous with French patriotism thanks to her contribution in the Hundred Years' War that raged between England and France in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Born a peasant, it seemed unlikely that she would ever make something of herself, but that all changed when God intervened. Joan claimed that God had singled her out to lead France to victory, and despite her distinct lack of battle experience she managed to persuade Charles of Valois to let her lead an army to the city of Orléans, which at the time was under siege by the English. With Joan at its head leading assaults, the French force overcame the foe to win back the city. The English retreated across the Loire River, and Joan went on to take back other French towns. But her luck wasn't to last.

As she defended Compiègne in 1430, she was thrown from her horse just outside the city. As the gates closed, the Anglo-Burgundians saw their chance and took her captive. They knew how much of a threat this young peasant girl was to them, and after a trial accusing her of witchcraft, heresy and dressing like a man, she was sentenced to death. Aged just 19 she was burned at the stake, but the final victory would be hers after all when her story was retold down the centuries as one of power, prowess and patriotism.

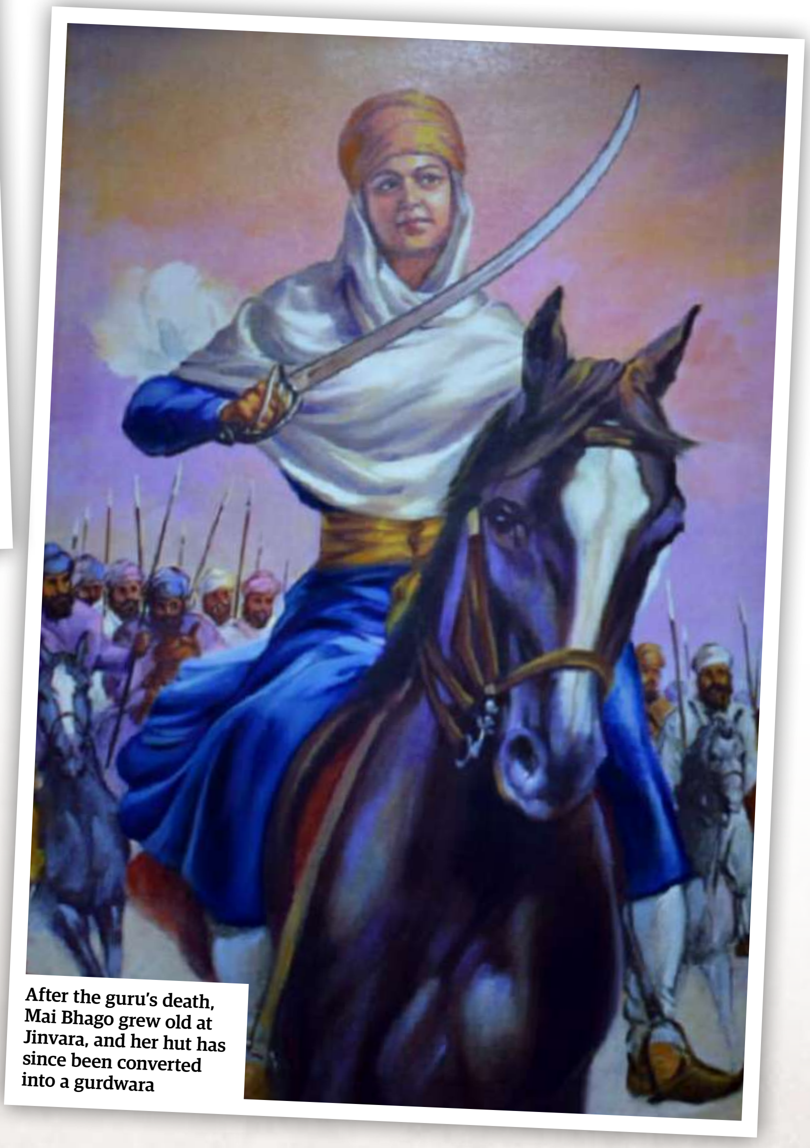
MAI BHAGO

17th-18th centuries

Punjab region

The year was 1705 and Sikhs and Mughals were locked in a bitter battle for supremacy. Morale was low among the Sikhs and 40 of them abandoned the fight, leaving their guru and trudging their way back home. But Mai Bhago was waiting, and she wasn't having any of it.

She railed at the deserters and then lifted their spirits before heading back to the battle with them. All 40 men died, but Mai Bhago survived. As the lone survivor, she was invited to join Guru Gobind Singh as a bodyguard.



After the guru's death, Mai Bhago grew old at Jinvara, and her hut has since been converted into a gurdwara

NAKANO TAKEKO

1847-1868

Aizu Domain, Japan

Despite what you may have been led to believe, the infamous samurai warriors weren't all men. While the majority of Japanese women followed strict etiquette, there were some who bucked the trend to join the ruthless fighters. One of these women was Nakano Takeko.

Takeko died in combat - going out in a blaze of glory at the Battle of Aizu. When her clan was facing down the enemy and their guns, she led a group of around 30 women in a counter-attack and managed to take down five men before she was killed. She was just 21.

Just before she died, Takeko told her sister to behead her so that her body couldn't be taken as a trophy

LOZEN

19th century

Chiricahua Apaches

Lozen was never really interested in housekeeping or any of the other traditional female roles in her tribe - she wanted to be a warrior. By her 20th birthday, she was more than capable of stealing horses, and she was trained to be a skilled rider, shooter and tactician.

She and her brother Victorio, leader of the Chiricahua Apaches, fought side by side to reclaim the land that was taken from them, and Victorio is often quoted referring to Lozen as his "right hand, strong as a man, braver than most, and cunning in strategy. Lozen is a shield to her people."

Pavlichenko's war record makes her one of the five deadliest snipers of all time, but it's likely that she actually had more kills that went unconfirmed

LYUDMILA PAVLICHENKO

1916-1974

Soviet Union

History's deadliest female sniper was a divorced teenage mother from a tiny town in Ukraine. In her bloody career she scored 309 confirmed kills, 36 of which were German snipers, after joining the Soviet Army in 1941.

When she'd originally gone to enlist, officials had laughed at her, telling her to become a nurse instead. Pavlichenko was having none of their misogyny. After finally being given a chance to prove herself, she was in.

Her new home was the 25th Chapayev Rifle Division, and she settled into her role quickly. In her first 75 days in combat she killed 187 Germans. Her reputation began to grow and she was given more and more dangerous missions until she was one on one with the enemy's snipers. One wrong move would mean certain death, but out of 36 face-offs she didn't lose one. The Germans began to talk to her over loudspeakers, trying to bribe her to defect.

Pavlichenko became the first Soviet soldier to enter the White House, but the American media riled her, reporting more about what she looked like than her war record. "I wear my uniform with honour," she rebutted. "It has been covered with blood in battle."

Pavlichenko served as one of 2,000 female Soviet snipers in World War II, and she was one of only 500 who survived - honour had definitely been something she had earned.

SPECIALISTS

96 LANDSKNECHTS

Who ever said war had to be dull? Step forward arguably the most marvellously attired soldiers in the history of warfare: the Landsknechts. But don't let their colourful clothing fool you - these German mercenaries were as ruthless as they were fashionable

102 NAPOLEON'S IMPERIAL GUARD

Regarded as the elite of the elite, Napoleon's Imperial Guard often helped France's emperor to turn the tide of a close-fought battle. Fall in and find out what made these men so special

110 GURKHAS

Since schooling the British in the art of jungle warfare over 200 years ago, Nepal's most redoubtable troops have been aiding the British Army in their struggles across the globe. Find out what it takes to join this select group

120 BIRTH OF THE SAS

Created to give the Axis powers hell, the SAS began its illustrious history raiding enemy posts on the dusty plains of North Africa

96

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BLOOD & COIN

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A LANDSKNECHT MERCENARY IN THE MOST DEVASTATING CONFLICT OF THE 17TH CENTURY

The Thirty Years' War is often remembered as one of Europe's longest and bloodiest conflicts, with its destructive origins rooted in the religious friction between Catholic and Protestant factions within the Holy Roman Empire.

The treaty of Augsburg in 1555 settled many of the existing disagreements between the two factions, but it did little to resolve the fundamental issues of imperial authority and the rights of individual states. When Ferdinand II, a zealous Catholic Hapsburg, became king of Bohemia, Hungary, and then was eventually elected emperor, Catholicism began to be strictly imposed throughout the empire. By 1618, many Protestant states, angry at the imposition, openly revolted.

For 30 years, terror and destruction plagued European countries, especially in the German states, where the lion's share of the fighting occurred. This wanton slaughter saw about 8 million Europeans lose their lives, with some German kingdoms losing up to 50 per cent of their populations. As well as the exceptional loss of life, the conflict is known for the large number of mercenary troops employed by both the Protestant and Catholic Leagues. Although by this point their golden years were waning, the German Landsknecht were still a fearsome fighting force.

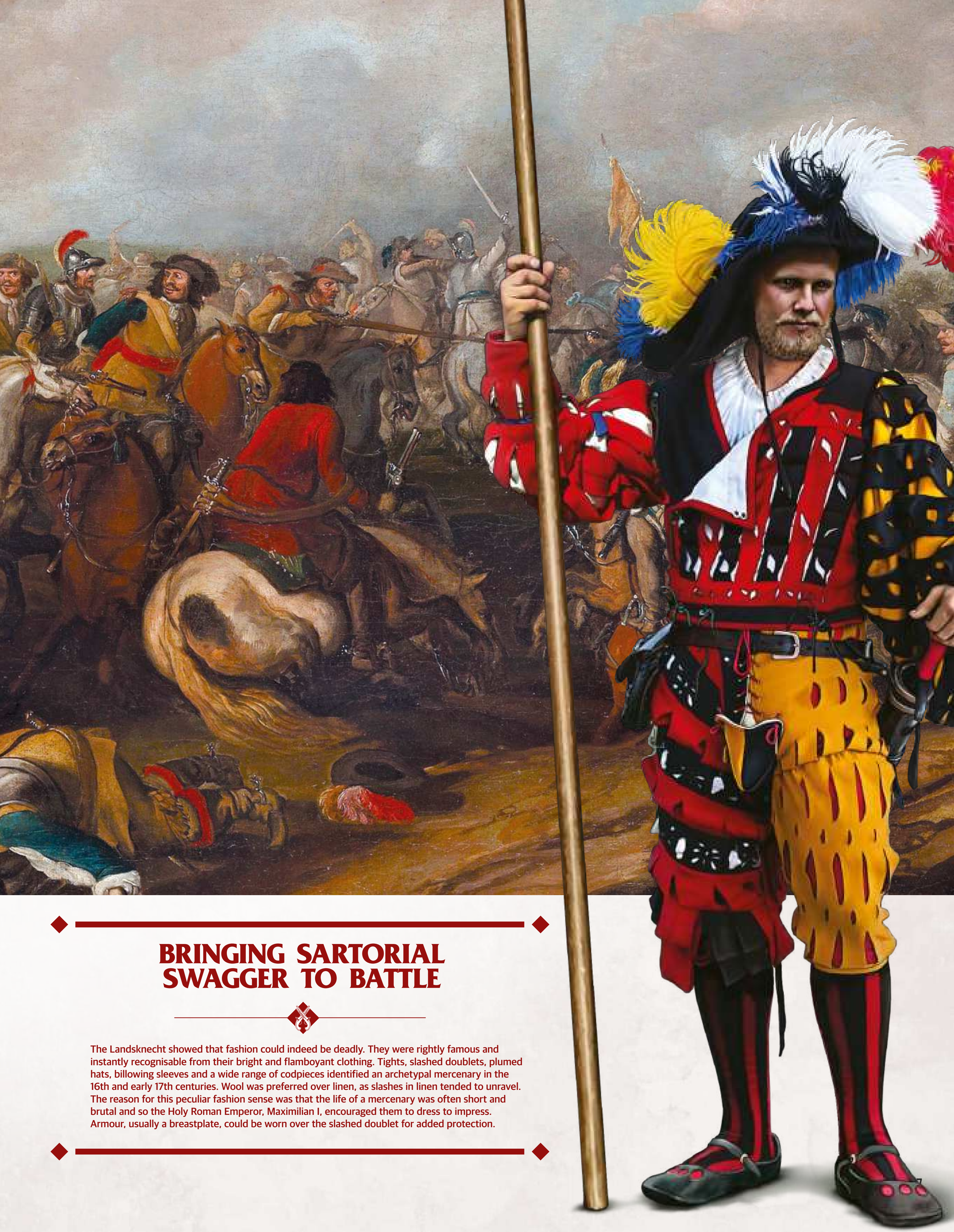
Created to combat and impersonate the Swiss mercenaries who started to dominate 15th- and 16th-century battlefields, the Landsknecht carved out their own fearsome reputation from international service in the armies of monarchs, such as those of Charles V and Henry VIII.

The main weapon of the Landsknecht, like many mercenary companies at the time, was the pike. Usually about six metres long, when used en masse the pike presented a hedge of razor-sharp metal that would decimate infantry and cavalry alike. The minimal training required to make a pike deadly in a recruit's hands was preferred over the use of other weapons such as bastard swords, halberds and arquebuses. The latter was used with pike formations in increasing numbers during the late 16th and 17th centuries, in what would become known as 'pike and shot'. Being flexible in this formation, which saw unit size reduced and formation changes all through the 16th century, allowed Landsknecht groups to operate effectively during the Thirty Years' War and beyond.

In the 1990s, German researchers uncovered a partially complete diary written by a Landsknecht mercenary during the war. Although the diary is not actually signed by the author, researchers have worked out that the book belonged to a man named Peter Hagendorf. His account paints a vivid picture of a soldier's life in a 17th-century army, with hunger, poverty and death common travelling companions.

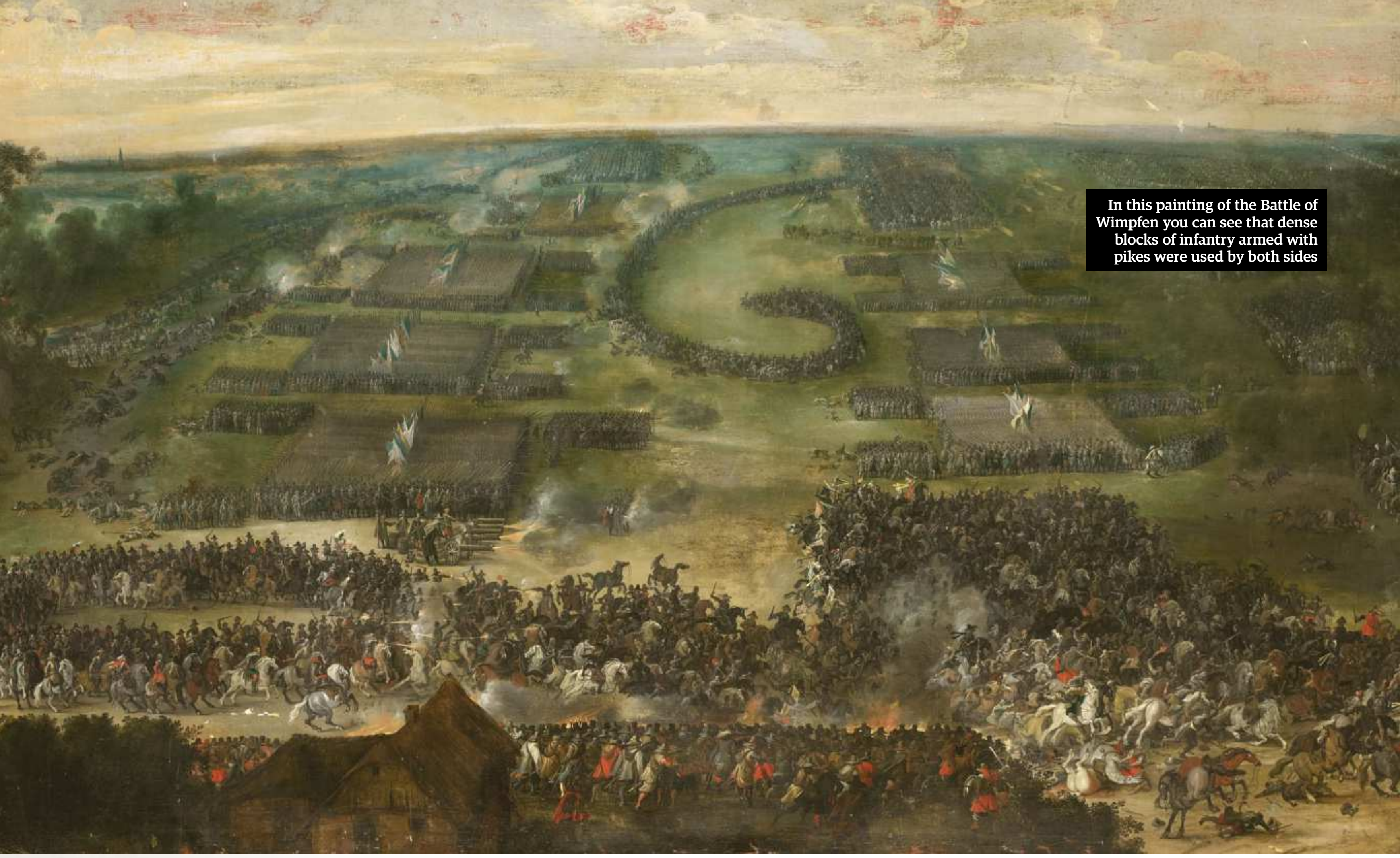
Spanning the years 1624-48, one of the diary's most astonishing aspects is the extraordinary distance Hagendorf travelled in 24 years - almost 15,000 miles, mostly on foot. His journey would take him across Germany, over the Alps to Italy, to the Baltic coast, then on to France, Pomerania and finally back to Germany again.

The diary also shows the fluidity of a mercenary's allegiances, with Hagendorf changing sides three times during the conflict. While he served under Gottfried Pappenheim for most of the war, he began in the service of the Venetians. Here, he initially fought against Pappenheim, but after the regiment disbanded and Hagendorf was left in poverty, the Landsknecht found himself on Pappenheim's payroll from 1627. He would serve for six years before his company was caught in the Swedish siege of Straubing and slaughtered almost to a man. Instead of surrendering, Hagendorf - now a sergeant - was recruited into the ranks of the Red Regiment. This sudden change does not appear to have alarmed Hagendorf, who goes on to tell how he sold one of his horses to pay



BRINGING SARTORIAL SWAGGER TO BATTLE

The Landsknecht showed that fashion could indeed be deadly. They were rightly famous and instantly recognisable from their bright and flamboyant clothing. Tights, slashed doublets, plumed hats, billowing sleeves and a wide range of codpieces identified an archetypal mercenary in the 16th and early 17th centuries. Wool was preferred over linen, as slashes in linen tended to unravel. The reason for this peculiar fashion sense was that the life of a mercenary was often short and brutal and so the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I, encouraged them to dress to impress. Armour, usually a breastplate, could be worn over the slashed doublet for added protection.



In this painting of the Battle of Wimpfen you can see that dense blocks of infantry armed with pikes were used by both sides

“BEING TAKEN OUT OF ACTION, WHILE REMOVING THE THREAT TO HIS LIFE, MEANT THAT A MERCENARY COULD NOT TAKE PART IN THE SACKING OF THE CITY AND THEREFORE NOT RECEIVE HIS PAY”

for a three-day drinking bender with his cousin. However, this faction change also did not last long, as in 1634 after a sound defeat he was back on the imperialist side.

The Thirty Years' War, almost more than any other conflict, was fought with a background firmly fixed in religious intolerances. Peter Hagendorf strangely never mentions his or his regiment's affiliations, although as a mercenary group this might not have been necessary. As the years progress, Hagendorf becomes increasingly brutal and desensitised to the violence and suffering happening around him.

Despite war being a mercenary's profession, Hagendorf's diaries give scant information on the battles he was involved in. His company only saw two major set-pieces in the war. One particularly brutal attack occurred on the city of Magdeburg on 20 May 1631. Contemporary accounts focus on the horror and wanton slaughter that occurred there, when thousands of angry, hungry and unpaid soldiers broke into the city. The carnage was so great that 'magdeburgisation' became a byword for total destruction for many years to come. One resident of the city, an eyewitness to the killing, wrote that the, “...shouting, crying and howling could be heard from far away”.

In contrast, Hagendorf's entry, from the soldier's perspective, leaves out the bloodshed and misery. He does express sorrow for the fall of Magdeburg, as it was, in his eyes, a beautiful city and was located within his 'fatherland', Germany. According to Tryntje Helfferich's translation of Hagendorf's diary in *The Thirty Years' War: A Documentary History* (2009, Hackett), he describes his part in the sacking: “I came into town with storming hand, without scathe. But in the town at the Newtown Gate, I was shot two times in the body, as this was my loot...” Unable to participate in the looting frenzy, Hagendorf was led back to the camp where he was given medical attention, “... for one I was shot in the stomach, and for the other through both axels that the bullet laid in the shirt. So the feldscher (army surgeon) bound my hands on the back so that he could insert the chisel (forceps)...”

Being taken out of action, while obviously removing the threat to his life, meant that a mercenary could not take part in the sacking of the city and therefore did not receive his pay. Luckily, Hangendorf's wife was on hand to enter the city and grab some loot. After fearing for her safety as buildings started being demolished, she brought back, “...a large tankard... two silver belts and clothes.”

Hagendorf was also present at the Battle of Breitenfeld, which occurred just a few months after the siege. His account of the battle, a crushing victory by the brilliant general Gustavus Adolphus, is rather muted as to the importance of the clash. If he was aware of the wider tactical and political changes, he does not make any note of them. The battle did convince many Protestant German states to back Sweden, but as Hagendorf was neutral, the significance seems to have passed him by.

Money was evidently on the forefront of every mercenary's mind, even in times of personal danger. During the Thirty Years' War, wages, like rations, were most of the time late or nonexistent. This in turn led to plunder and looting being the most effective way to get paid. Hagendorf frequently documents his monetary triumphs and woes, giving us an insight into the constant struggle to make a living during the chaos. Hagendorf had several schemes over the years to supplement his mercenary income. In 1625, he worked a trade with a lute maker after his guard shift, earning himself a reasonable profit. This money disappeared by the next year, however, with Hagendorf finding himself begging on the streets of Milan.

With no other income, Hagendorf joined Pappenheim's regiment, as he was, “...completely down and out.” Tumultuous years would follow, with Hagendorf secure one moment and then, as

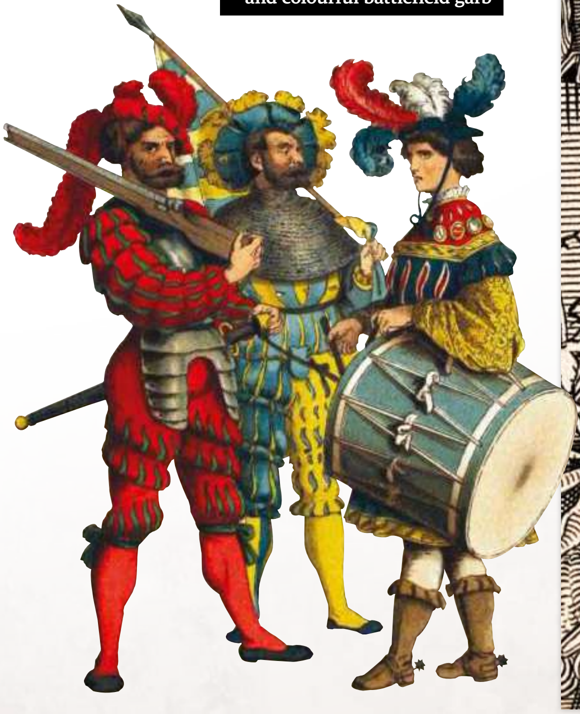
FORM RANKS

TIGHT DISCIPLINE AND A RIGID COMMAND STRUCTURE WERE ESSENTIAL TO CONTROLLING THESE HEAD-STRONG WARRIORS

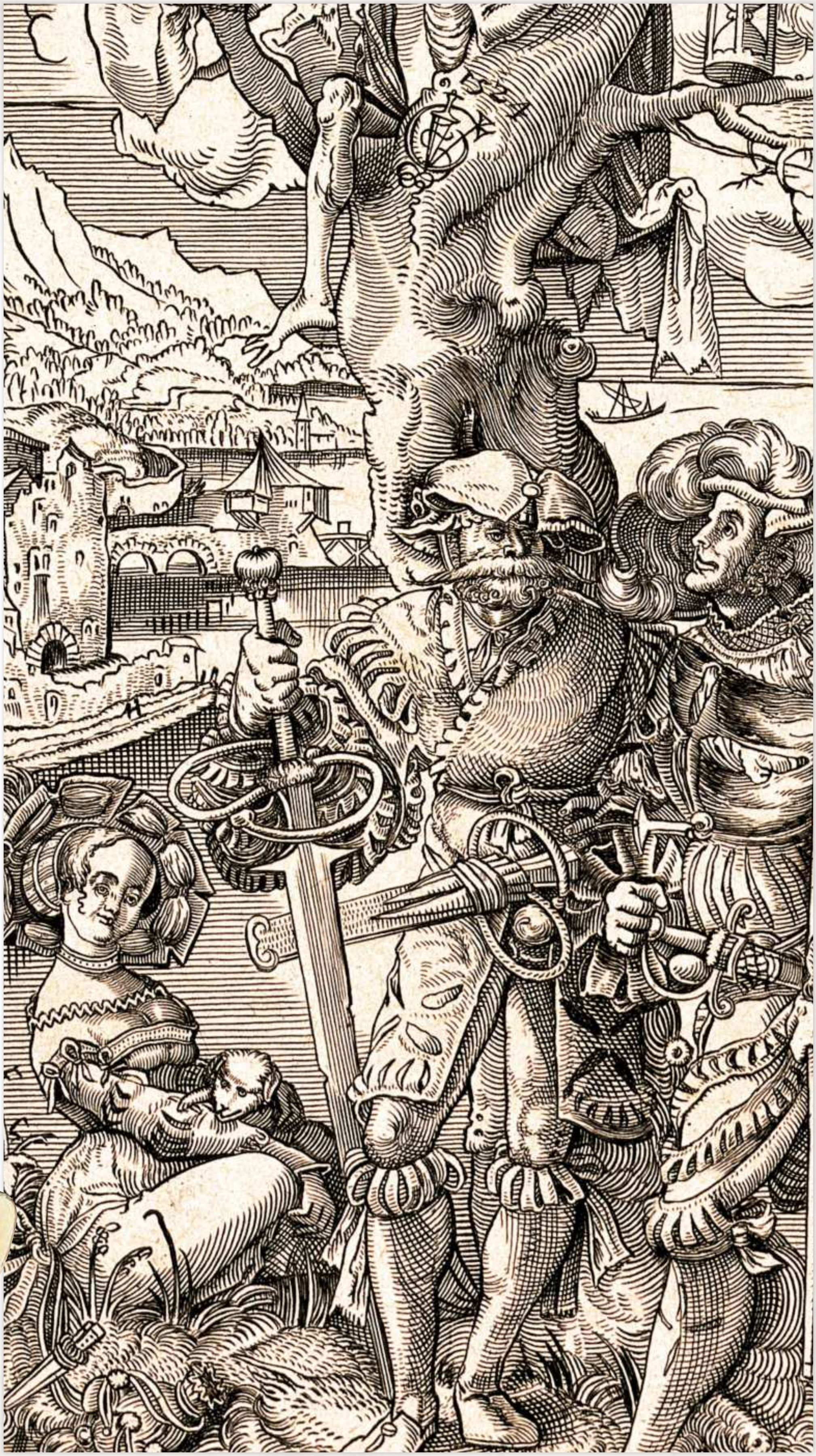
The organisation of a Landsknecht company revolved around a complex command and disciplinary structure. The highest-ranking officer, usually a colonel, would have direct control over the rest of his command group, which would have numbered about 22 men. In addition to ranks like captain, lieutenant, sergeant and corporal, there was also an ensign rank. It was their duty to bear the company colours, which served a dual purpose. One was to embody the company spirit, and the other, more practical role was to act as a rallying point and landmark on the battlefield; where smoke and the clamour of battle could obscure views, the colours would act as a marker.

Other, less militant ranks were just as important in the running of a company. A selection of clerks, surgeons, cooks, priests, servants and musicians were essential additions that kept the company whole. Some of these positions were looked upon with disdain and disgust by their fellow mercenaries but were deemed necessary.

The position of provost was such a role, with the man attempting to curb the excessive drinking, gambling and violence that was common place in a company. He would also be charged with keeping the multitude of camp followers – from provision merchants to cooks, prostitutes and craftsmen – in line. If anyone should loot, burn or attack without the consent of the commanding officer, they could be in line to meet the executioner. These individuals, identifiable by their blood red garb, were the most loathed people in the camp.



Landsknecht prided themselves on their garish and colourful battlefield garb

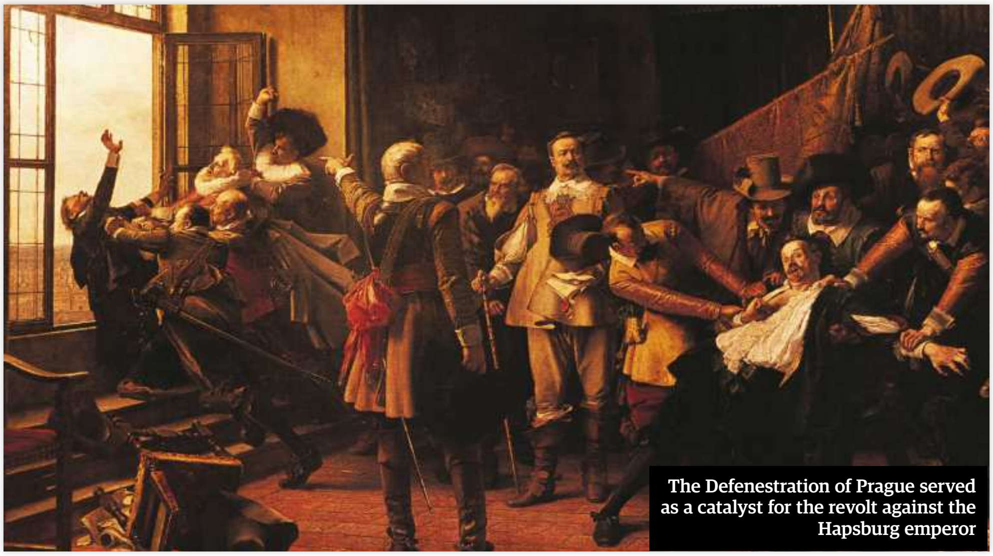


HORRORS OF WAR

WITH MARAUDING ARMIES MENACING THE POPULATIONS OF EUROPE, BOTH SIDES WERE GUILTY OF ATROCITIES

The Thirty Years' War had horrendous casualty rates, as it was not just military units that were affected. The civilian population of Europe, especially Germany, suffered untold atrocities at the hands of marauding mercenary forces. Men from both sides were responsible for such acts like theft, extortion and even murder. These demands could also be levied as taxes, with armies demanding food and coin while moving through a province. Extortion would consist of threats to person or property in exchange for payment. According to Helfferich's translation in *The Thirty Years' War: A Documentary History*, Hagendorf writes about such an incident while in the service of Pappenheim: "Wherever we camped overnight, the head of the household would give us… half a thaler. It was for the best, since then we… let him keep his livestock in peace."

These acts and many like them were a regular occurrence in the war, which is not surprising as equally distressing acts were committed even before the war began. The Defenestration of Prague, as it is known, occurred in 1618 and was one of the direct causes of the war. Catholic regents had travelled to Bohemia in an attempt to calm rebellious Protestants. The discussion grew heated and coaxed the inflammatory words, "See, all dear lords, these men are great enemies of us and our religion…" With this statement, the regents were thrown from a window, some luckily surviving the fall by apparently landing in manure.



The Defenestration of Prague served as a catalyst for the revolt against the Hapsburg emperor

in 1634, totally destitute the next. His servant was robbed of all the possessions he had sent away for safekeeping. However, other enterprises went well, as in 1640 and 1646, when he helped alleviate ration shortages by baking bread in a homemade oven, for a nominal fee of course.

An army marches on its stomach, and this was especially true during the Thirty Years' War. Long years of conflict had all but destroyed many crop yields across Germany, and daily rations would almost always come up short. A typical daily ration would consist of 730 grams of bread, baked with wheat and rye flour, usually prepared communally then shared out.

Corruption was rife in the companies themselves, with the bulking out of provisions just one of a growing list of problems. Some captains sought to increase their profits by recording 'dummy' recruits on their rosters. These men, while not existing but on paper, were given equipment and wages by their employer, with the most senior officers all taking a cut. While this lined the pockets of some, it did lower the combat effectiveness of the company.

The greed trickled down the command structure, with quartermasters and officers also on the lookout to supplement their wages. They would often cut the flour with inferior grain to drive up their profit margins. With differences in regional weights thrown in, the unfortunate soldier on the ground would often find his bread lacking. The story was the same with meat rations, with maggot-ridden or rotten meat used to wring some extra coin from starving troops. It is no wonder, with the ration situation so unpredictable, that men would turn to robbery to fill their empty bellies. Hagendorf, no stranger to pillaging, stole and burned vast swathes of French crops near Colmar.

Indeed, in the Hagendorf diaries, much of his writing is given over to the food and drink he enjoyed on campaign. His descriptions of feasts or a distinct lack of food seem to take precedent over all military engagements and most other aspects of life. Almost every year he feels the need to record when he received "good quarters". This came to mean when an inn would serve chicken, duck or veal instead of tired old beef, the main meat ration.

Perhaps as part of his dangerous lifestyle, Hagendorf expressed a great love for beer, wine and any other alcohol that he could get his hands on. However, drinking would only ever provide him with a brief respite from his problems, and usually it made an already tough life unbearable.

In 1625, he was disbanded from a Venetian mercenary company. Arriving at the town of Schaffhausen, he begged enough money for some warm shoes, a necessity considering he had just crossed the Alps. Instead, he found an inn where, "…the wine was so good that I forgot the shoes."

In the 24 years we know Hagendorf was campaigning, his constant movement made it impossible to settle down with his family, who chose instead to follow him on his travels. Raising children in that environment, when even adults were susceptible to hunger, cold and illness, would have been a supreme challenge.

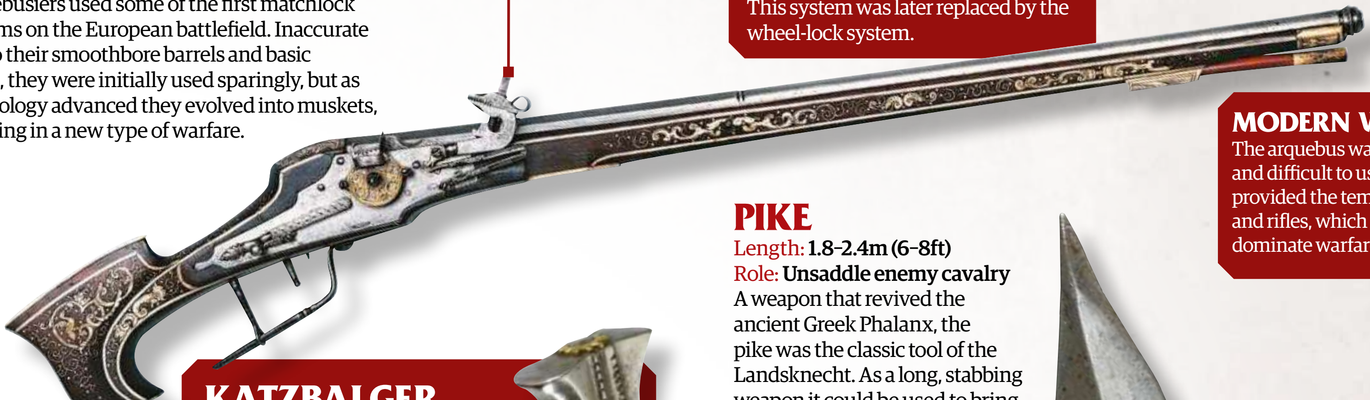
Tragically, over the course of 24 years, he suffered the deaths of seven of his children and his first wife. These children, marked with a simple cross in his diary, usually didn't even live a few months before becoming ill and passing away. After peace was declared in 1648, Hagendorf was reunited with his only surviving son and, with the fighting finished, he states that he "brought my son out of Egypt".

The heavy use of mercenaries in the Thirty Years' War was understandably not popular with local populations. Using underpaid men that made their wages by looting could mean that an army stayed in the field for years. The promise of plunder would keep many braving terrible conditions on and off the battlefield. A 16th-century writer described them as, "Blaspheming, whoring, gambling, murdering, burning, robbing and widow-making… it is their common handiwork and greatest amusement."

This ad-hoc system may go some way to explaining some of the brutal methods used by Landsknecht and other mercenaries. These were men who endured sometimes unimaginable hardships. Hunger, disease, poverty and death on the battlefield would have hung over the heads of many, perhaps driving them to questionable actions purely out of a desire to survive.

WEAPONS OF A
LANDSKNECHT MERCENARY

The Landsknechts were a feared and specialised mercenary force equipped with a range of devastating weapons



ARQUEBUS

Ammunition: **Round shot**
Role: **Pierce heavy armour**

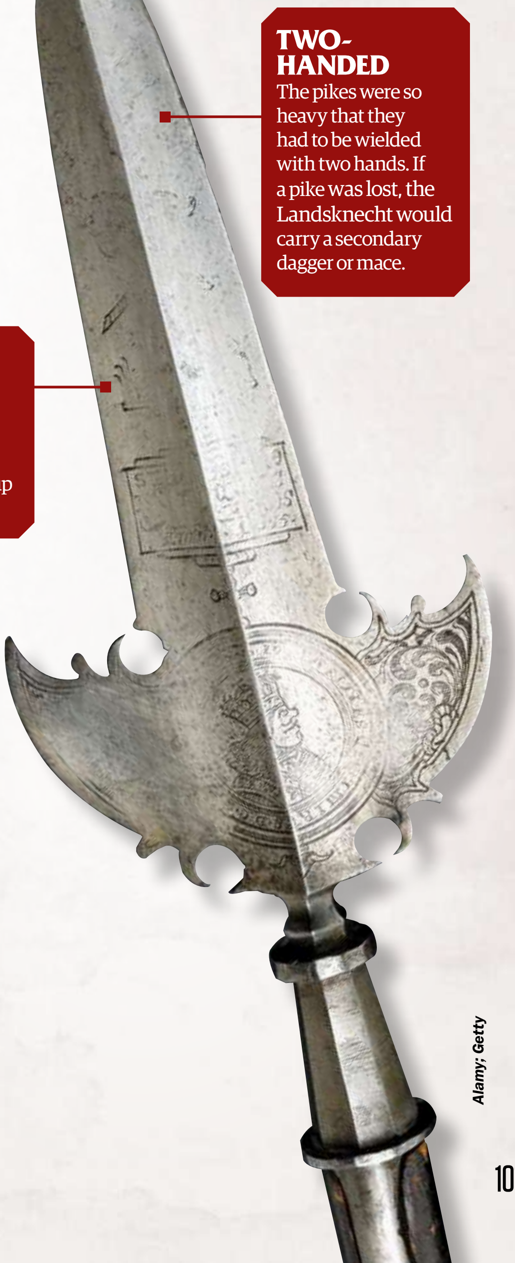
Arquebusiers used some of the first matchlock firearms on the European battlefield. Inaccurate due to their smoothbore barrels and basic sights, they were initially used sparingly, but as technology advanced they evolved into muskets, ushering in a new type of warfare.

FIRING MECHANISM

To fire, the arquebus required a lit match that would trigger the complicated matchlock mechanism. This system was later replaced by the wheel-lock system.

MODERN WARFARE

The arquebus was very inefficient and difficult to use. However, it provided the template for muskets and rifles, which would come to dominate warfare in later centuries.



PIKE

Length: **1.8-2.4m (6-8ft)**
Role: **Unsaddle enemy cavalry**

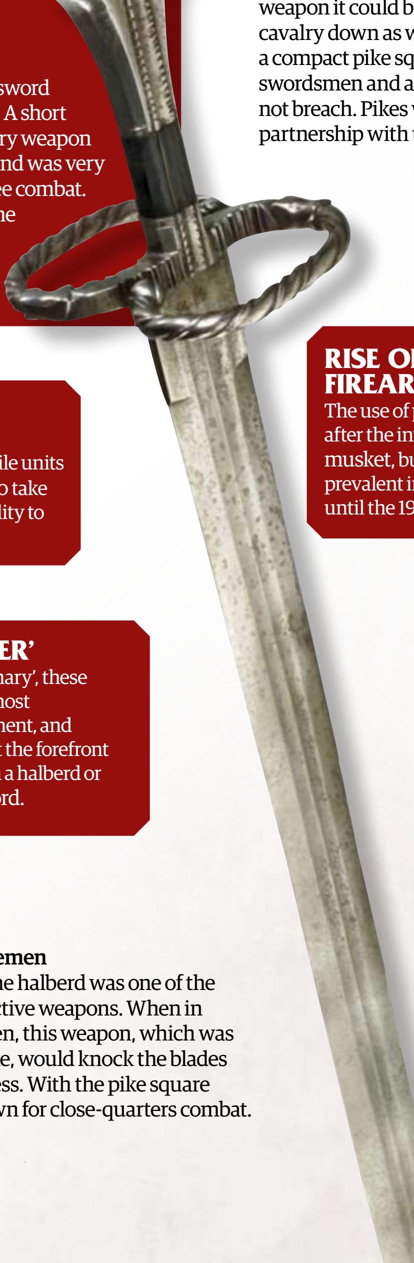
A weapon that revived the ancient Greek Phalanx, the pike was the classic tool of the Landsknecht. As a long, stabbing weapon it could be used to bring cavalry down as well as create a compact pike square that swordsmen and axemen could not breach. Pikes worked well in partnership with the arquebus.

TWO-HANDED

The pikes were so heavy that they had to be wielded with two hands. If a pike was lost, the Landsknecht would carry a secondary dagger or mace.

RISE OF THE FIREARM

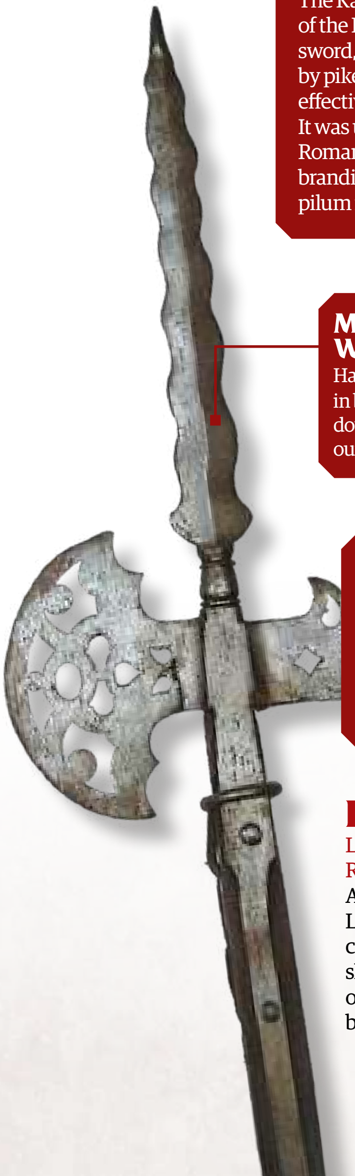
The use of pikes dwindled after the invention of the musket, but they were still prevalent in warfare right up until the 19th century.



KATZBALGER

Length: **94.2cm (37.1in)**
Role: **Short-bladed weapon**

The Katzbalger was the classic sword of the Landsknecht mercenary. A short sword, it was used as a secondary weapon by pikemen and arquebusiers and was very effective in close-quarters melee combat. It was used in a similar role to the Roman gladius that legionaries brandished after losing their pilum in battle.



MULTIPURPOSE WEAPON

Halberdiers were very versatile units in battle and had the power to take down cavalry and the flexibility to outmanoeuvre pikemen.

'DOPPELSÖLDNER'

Meaning 'double mercenary', these Landsknecht were the most experienced of the regiment, and would put themselves at the forefront of the battle, armed with a halberd or 'Kriegsmesser' longsword.

HALBERD

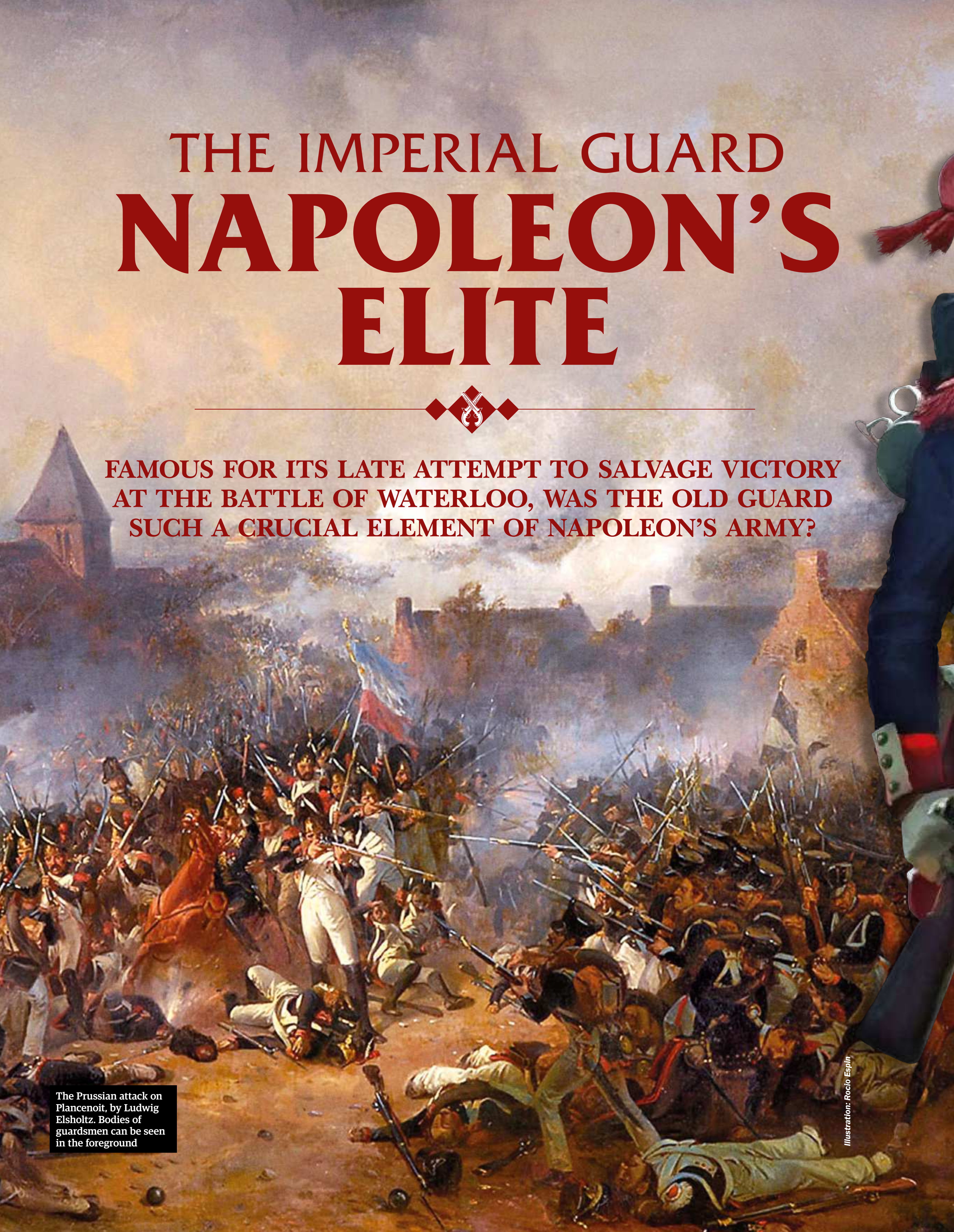
Length: **1.5-1.8m (5-6ft)**
Role: **Disarm enemy pikemen**

A spear and axe hybrid, the halberd was one of the Landsknecht's most effective weapons. When in conflict with rival pikemen, this weapon, which was slightly shorter than a pike, would knock the blades off and render them useless. With the pike square broken, swords were drawn for close-quarters combat.

Alamy; Getty

THE IMPERIAL GUARD
NAPOLEON'S ELITE

FAMOUS FOR ITS LATE ATTEMPT TO SALVAGE VICTORY AT THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO, WAS THE OLD GUARD SUCH A CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF NAPOLEON'S ARMY?



The Prussian attack on Plancenoit, by Ludwig Elsholtz. Bodies of guardsmen can be seen in the foreground

Illustration: Rocio Espin

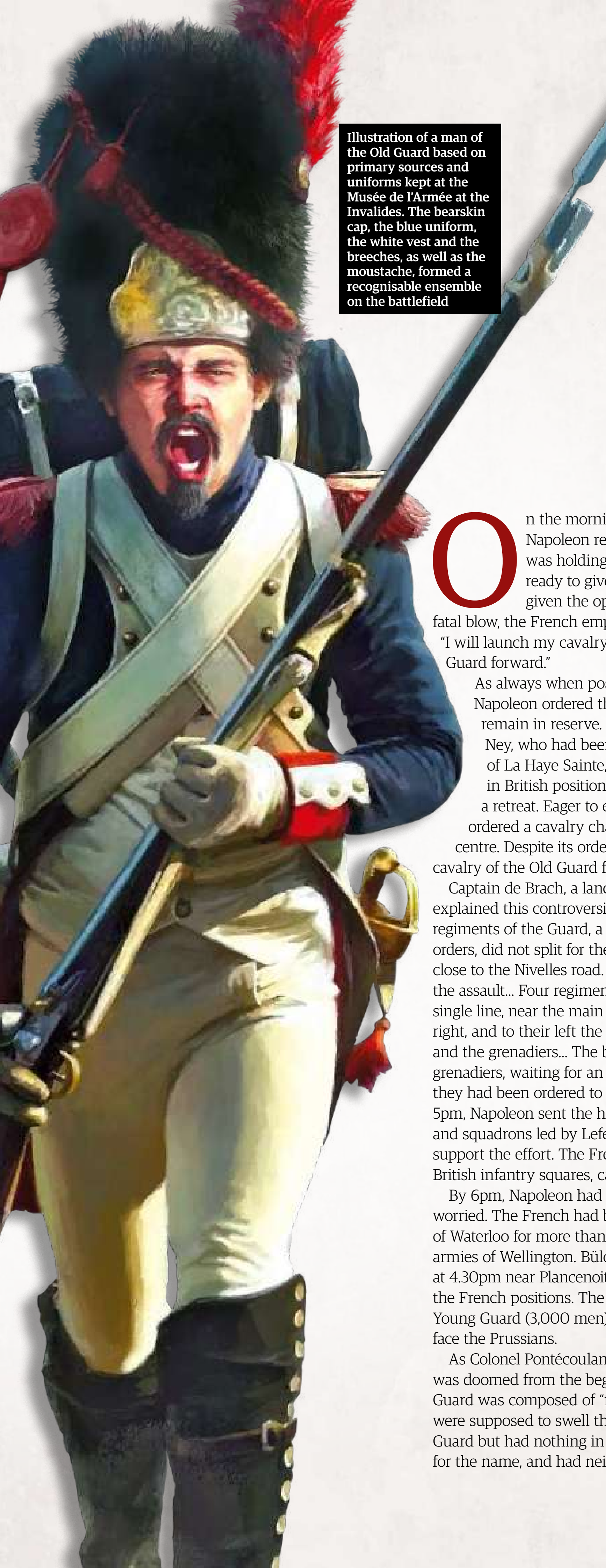


Illustration of a man of the Old Guard based on primary sources and uniforms kept at the Musée de l'Armée at the Invalides. The bearskin cap, the blue uniform, the white vest and the breeches, as well as the moustache, formed a recognisable ensemble on the battlefield

On the morning of 18 June 1815, Napoleon realised that Wellington was holding his ground and was ready to give battle. Delighted to be given the opportunity to strike a fatal blow, the French emperor said to General Foy, "I will launch my cavalry and will send my Old Guard forward."

As always when positioning his forces, Napoleon ordered the Imperial Guard to remain in reserve. Before 4pm, Marshal Ney, who had been tasked with the capture of La Haye Sainte, mistook movements in British positions for the beginning of a retreat. Eager to exploit the situation, he ordered a cavalry charge to break Wellington's centre. Despite its orders to stay put, the light cavalry of the Old Guard followed the charge.

Captain de Brach, a lancer of the Guard, later explained this controversial move: "Four horse regiments of the Guard, a division under Ney's orders, did not split for the whole day and stayed close to the Nivelles road. They did not move until the assault… Four regiments were positioned on a single line, near the main road, the lancers on the right, and to their left the chasseurs, the dragoons and the grenadiers… The brigade of dragoons and grenadiers, waiting for an order, suddenly believed they had been ordered to charge; we followed!" At 5pm, Napoleon sent the heavy cavalry of the Guard and squadrons led by Lefebvre-Desnouettes to support the effort. The French cavalry crashed into British infantry squares, causing little damage.

By 6pm, Napoleon had good reason to be worried. The French had been fighting the Battle of Waterloo for more than six hours against the armies of Wellington. Bülow's IV Corps had arrived at 4.30pm near Plancenoit, not far from the rear of the French positions. The Duhesme Division of the Young Guard (3,000 men) had been dispatched to face the Prussians.

As Colonel Pontécoulant explained, the struggle was doomed from the beginning. The Young Guard was composed of "fresh soldiers who were supposed to swell the ranks of the Imperial Guard but had nothing in common with it, except for the name, and had neither its courage or devotion." When the Young Guard was driven out of Plancenoit, Napoleon ordered the deployment of the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Grenadiers and the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Chasseurs of the Old Guard. General Pelet and 1,110 French soldiers were ordered by the emperor to advance with levelled bayonets. The Prussians, used to seeing the Imperial Guard involved in mass assaults, panicked and abandoned the village.

Von Bülow, determined to recapture the village, sent the divisions of Hiller, Ryssel and Tippelskirch - a total of 27 battalions supported by artillery fire. The two Old Guard battalions, as well as 2,000 soldiers of the Young Guard, resisted until nightfall. At 9pm, the church and the cemetery were finally captured by the Prussian army. General Pelet and a handful of soldiers of the Old Guard managed to withdraw before joining other retreating soldiers.

The heroic defence of Plancenoit gave Napoleon enough time to carry on the fight against the armies of Wellington. At around 7.30pm he launched infantry units of the Imperial Guard against Wellington's centre. The During Battalion was left near the Caillou farm to protect the French headquarters, while the 1st Grenadiers was positioned not far from the Maison du Roi farm as a last reserve. While advancing, Napoleon ordered another three battalions of the 1st and 2nd Chasseurs and a battalion of the 2nd Grenadiers to remain in reserve. Therefore, no battalion of the Old Guard participated in the famous assault.

It seems six battalions of the Middle Guard (3,000 men), supported by two batteries of Imperial Guard horse artillery, went forward while playing the Marche des bonnets à poils (the march of the bearskin hats). The Guards' advance threatened the allied centre but was ultimately stopped. Indeed, the French, outnumbered and exposed, faltered and broke. For the first time the elite of Napoleon's army had failed. Cries of 'La Garde recule!' ('The Guard retreats!') filled the air.

During the following debacle, battalions of the Old Guard were able to withdraw in good order before forming a square to fight the ultimate combats of the day. After 15 years of distinguished existence, this group of elite soldiers had ceased to exist. The Imperial Guard was dead.

CREATION AND ORGANISATION

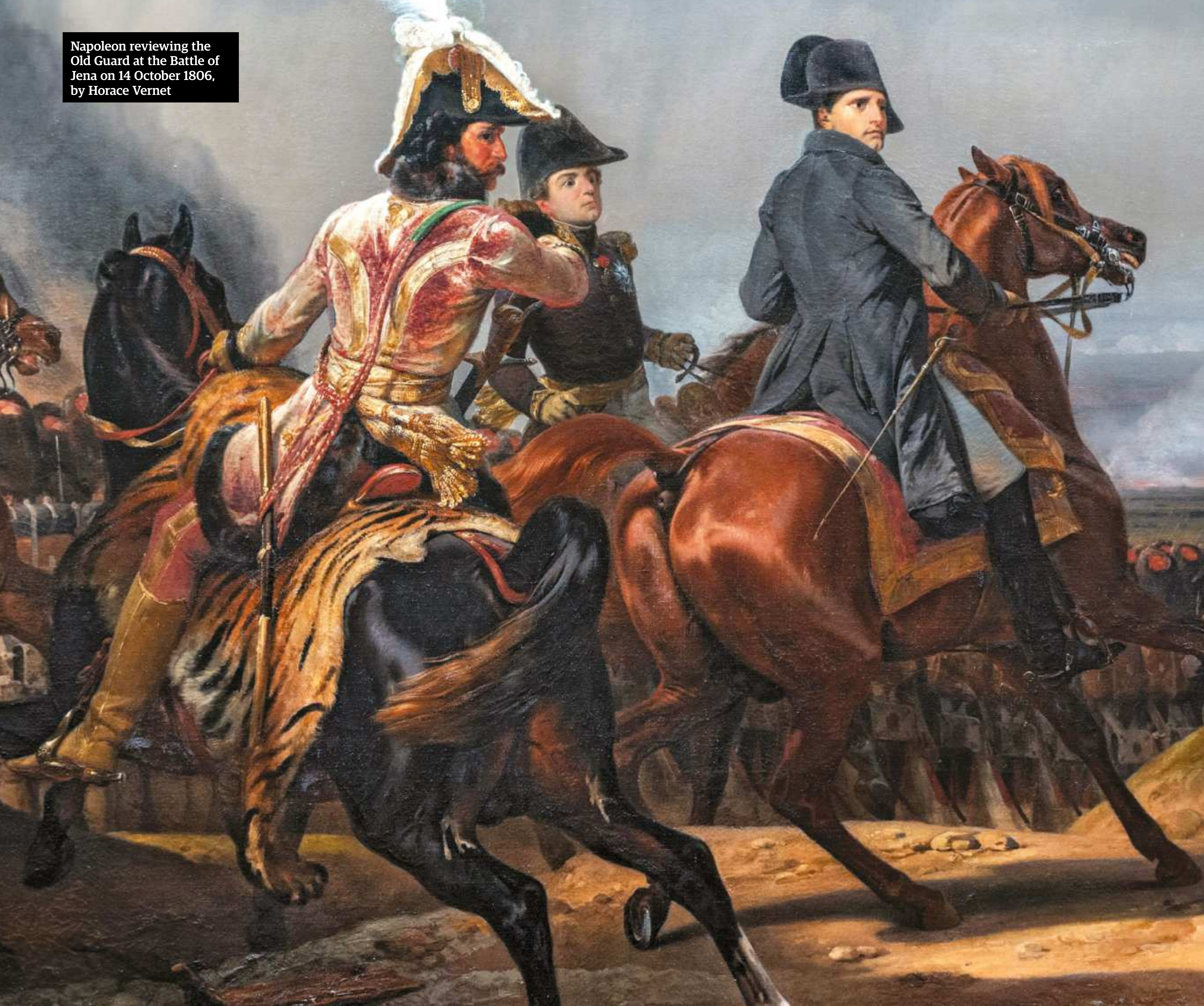
After orchestrating a coup in November 1799 (the coup of 18 Brumaire) and becoming first consul of France, Napoleon Bonaparte wanted a formation for his own protection. The former Guard of the Directory (garde du directoire) became the core of the new Consular Guard (garde des consuls).

The grenadiers of the Guards of the Directory had just played an important part in the coup of 18 Brumaire, having rescued Napoleon when he was being physically threatened by the Council of Five Hundred. At the beginning of 1800, the Consular Guard was made of two battalions of foot grenadiers, a company of light infantry, two squadrons of horse grenadiers, a company of chasseurs (light cavalry regiment) and a detachment of artillery – 2,089 men in total. Joachim Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law, became the first commander of the Guard (21 October 1799 to 16 April 1800) before being succeeded by his friend Jean Lannes.

The unit received its baptism by fire at the Battle of Marengo (14 June 1800) against Austria. The official French account of the battle portrayed the Guard as a key unit: "They were positioned in the middle of the battlefield, a rock in this gigantic field. Nobody was able to hurt them, cavalry, infantry, artillery, everybody was taking shots at this battalion, in vain." The Austrians, however, offered a rather different picture of the Guard's actions at Marengo: "The Guard was broken, routed. Its soldiers were almost all killed or taken and its cannons were captured." The Austrian account was exaggerated, but the Consular Guard did lose 50 per cent of its men on the battlefield, while the Horse Guard, composed of 245 grenadiers and 185 chasseurs, lost 30 per cent of its soldiers. Three men of the Guard were noticed for their bravery: Leroy, Lanceleur and Milet. Each had captured a flag and a handful of enemy soldiers.

Back in Paris, Napoleon, realising that giving the leadership of the Guard to another man was a threat to his authority, seized its command. Jean Lannes was displeased by this decision but was dismissed and dispatched to Portugal to act as ambassador. In August 1802 Napoleon changed the constitution to make the consulate permanent. Essentially, he had become a king without a crown.

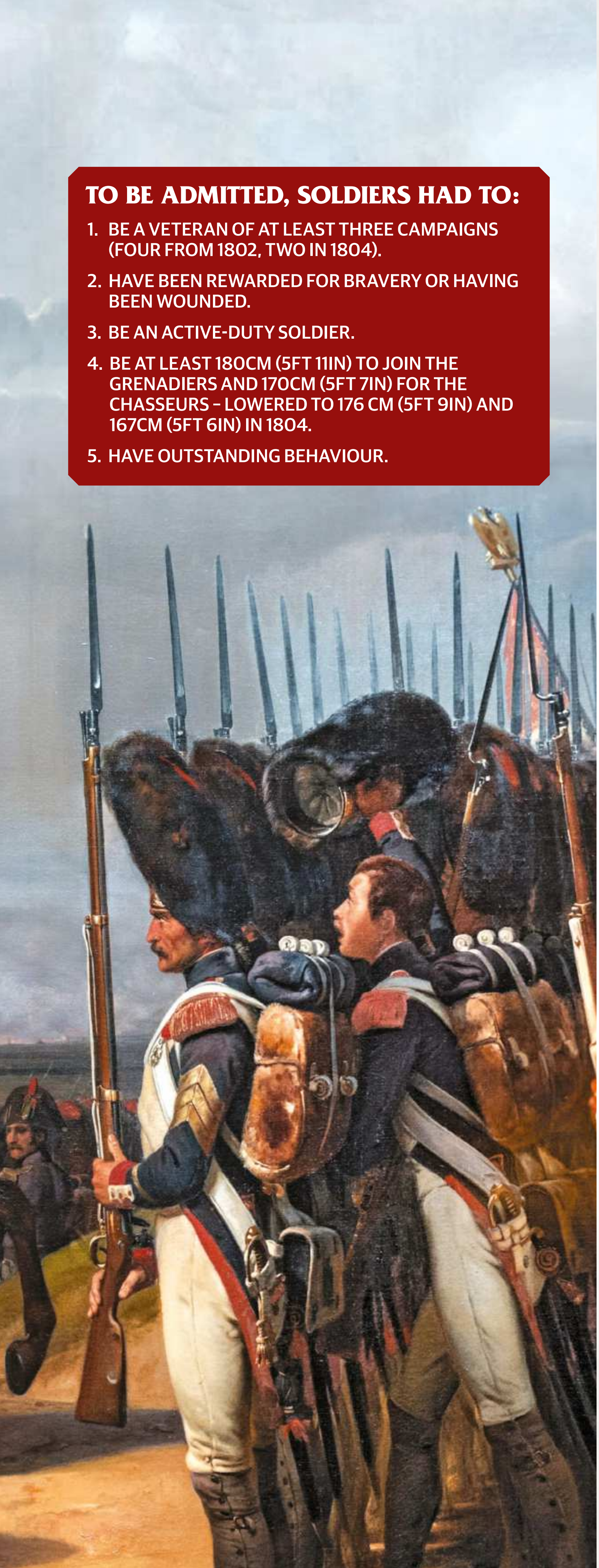
New units were incorporated into the Consular Guard. The infantry was reinforced by a regiment of foot grenadiers and a regiment of foot chasseurs (all veterans). The cavalry saw the arrival of a regiment of horse grenadiers, a regiment of horse chasseurs – including the famous Mamelukes – a squadron of horse artillery, the Legion of Elite Gendarmerie, a battalion of Sailors of the Guard and four companies of train d'artillerie. There was

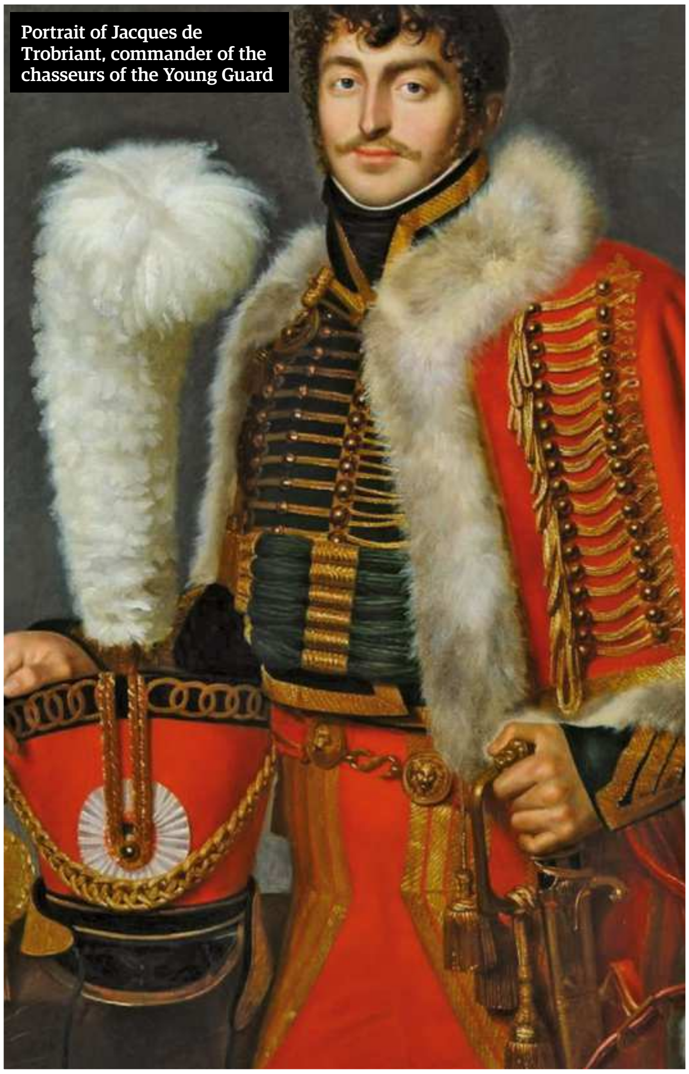


Napoleon reviewing the Old Guard at the Battle of Jena on 14 October 1806, by Horace Vernet

TO BE ADMITTED, SOLDIERS HAD TO:

1. BE A VETERAN OF AT LEAST THREE CAMPAIGNS (FOUR FROM 1802, TWO IN 1804).
2. HAVE BEEN REWARDED FOR BRAVERY OR HAVING BEEN WOUNDED.
3. BE AN ACTIVE-DUTY SOLDIER.
4. BE AT LEAST 180CM (5FT 11IN) TO JOIN THE GRENADIERS AND 170CM (5FT 7IN) FOR THE CHASSEURS – LOWERED TO 176 CM (5FT 9IN) AND 167CM (5FT 6IN) IN 1804.
5. HAVE OUTSTANDING BEHAVIOUR.





Portrait of Jacques de Trobriant, commander of the chasseurs of the Young Guard

THE YOUNG & THE MIDDLE

THE IMPERIAL GUARD WAS NOT ONLY COMPRISED OF THE FAMOUS OLD GUARD BUT INCLUDED OTHER UNITS THAT FOUGHT VALIANTLY FOR THEIR EMPEROR

If the Old Guard is still famous today, it should not be forgotten that the Imperial Guard was also made of several other units. Two are often neglected by the historiography. The Middle Guard was created in 1806 to welcome the vélites and was composed of grenadiers and chasseurs, all veterans of the 1805 to 1809 campaigns. Used on several occasions, it was eventually merged with the Old Guard but was still referred to by many soldiers by its former name.

The Young Guard was the name given to the units of the Imperial Guard created after 1812. It was supposed to train junior cadres before they could be integrated into the Old Guard or the line as officers. It included both infantry and cavalry regiments (such as the chasseurs of the Young Guard).

The Young Guard was systematically employed on the battlefield, leading to high casualty rates, but its value varied greatly. After the disastrous Russian campaign of 1812, volunteers and conscripts were taken directly into the Young Guard with minimal entry requirements to minimise the desertion problem. The resulting lack of experience resulted in varying degrees of skill and motivation, but there is no doubt that the Young Guard fought bravely in 1814 and during the Hundred Days.

also a guard hospital. In total, the Consular Guard was made up of 9,798 men.

On 10 May 1804 a proclamation transformed the Consular Guard into the Imperial Guard: "The guard has been notified that the Senate proclaimed today Napoleon Bonaparte emperor of the French and made his power hereditary. Vive l'empereur! Unlimited devotion and fidelity to Napoleon, first emperor of the French. Today, the guard takes the title of Imperial Guard..."

The emperor was determined to welcome only the best men in this formation. A separate decree stated that "Soldiers of all branches can join the Consular Guard. The admission is a reward for your bravery and conduct." To be admitted, soldiers had a number of requirements.

Admission to the Guard was usually preceded by a recommendation from the colonel of the regiment to which the candidate belonged.

In 1806 the above-mentioned regiments became the Old Guard. Its soldiers were not necessarily aged, but the emperor had decided to form new regiments with less strict requirements. A few soldiers of the formed Consular Guard had plenty of experience. The first man listed in the regiment's register was born in 1751 and served until 1 January 1814. The oldest was born in 1738 but was awarded a pension the same year the Guard was formed.

The composition of the Guard changed as new units were created, such as the Empress' Dragoons and the Polish Lancers. Progressively, the Middle Guard merged with the Old Guard. Five battalions of vélites were also built around young volunteers - all from wealthy families - wishing to become officers. Salary and equipment were paid for by the family. In 1806, Napoleon also created a new corps of cavalry soldiers recruited from among noble families. The payment of 1,900 francs and a pension were the only conditions to join. The army, reacting to this reminiscence of the Bourbon army, forced Napoleon to dismiss this unit.

Soldiers of the Old Guard were better treated than infantry regiments. Their salary was much higher: a grenadier earned 1.17 francs per day, while a regular soldier received 0.30. A corporal was paid 1.67 francs in the Old Guard and 0.45 francs in the line. The officers were also much better treated.

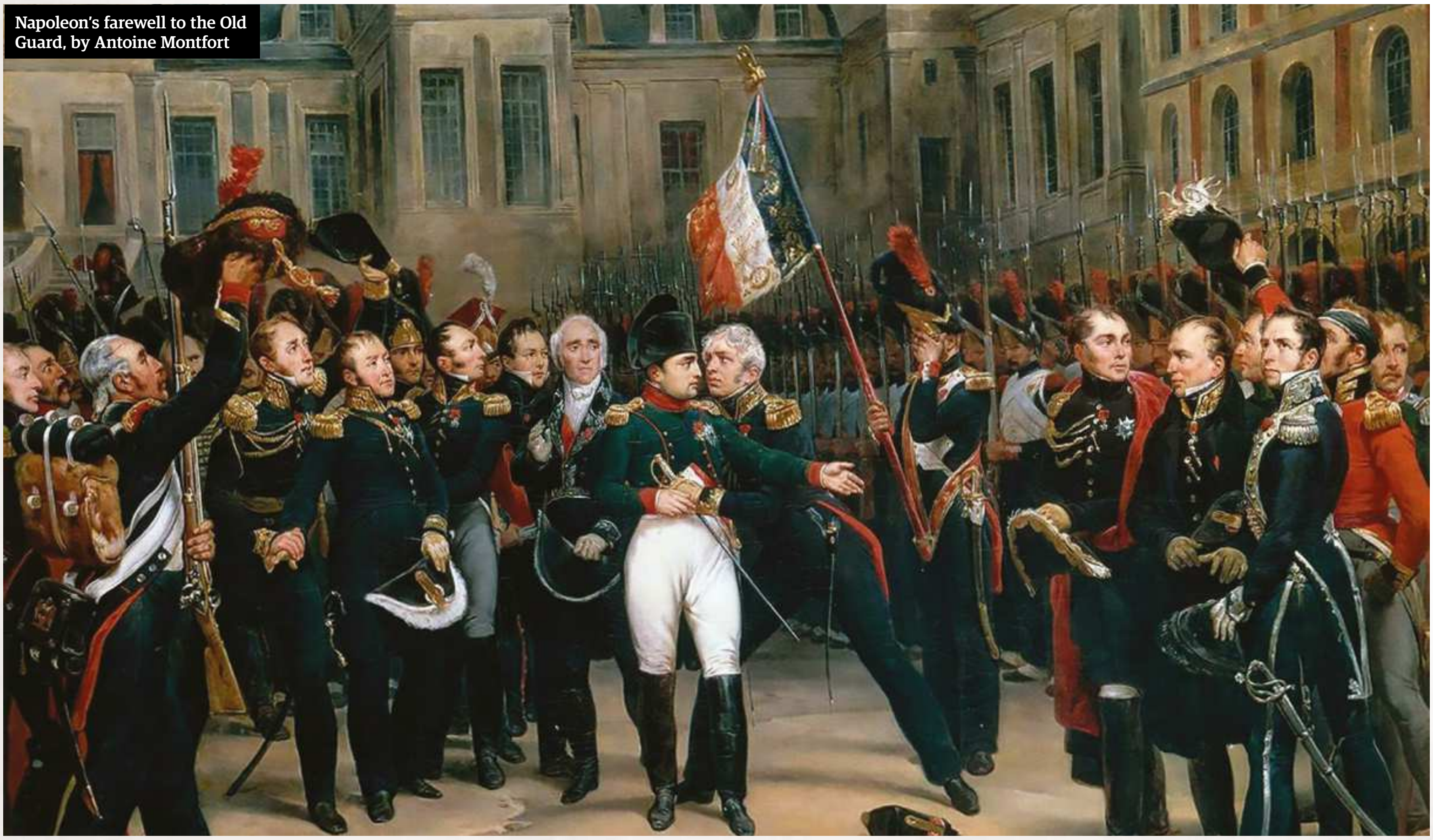
Moreover, the Old Guard occasionally received bonuses and rewards. Guard barracks were far more comfortable and the Imperial Guard was always first to choose where to stay when at war. The hospital of the Guard was particularly good and was managed by the best doctors, and likewise uniforms were tailored by the most talented men. Line infantry soldiers were supposed to keep their uniforms for two years, while guardsmen had new clothes as soon as signs of wear were detected.

Soldiers of the Old Guard had even more privileges: an 1805 decree gave grenadiers and non-commissioned officers a ranking advantage. A grenadier or a chasseur of the Old Guard was supposed to be the equal of a sergeant in other units. Officers of the Old Guard also had similar advantages. An imperial decree of 13 July 1804 stated, "Everywhere where the troops of the Imperial Guard serve with the line, they are awarded positions of honour. When together, officers and non-commissioned officers of the Imperial Guard of similar ranks are automatically made commanders. When a detachment of the Guard meets a Corps or a detachment of the line, they must be saluted... until they are gone."

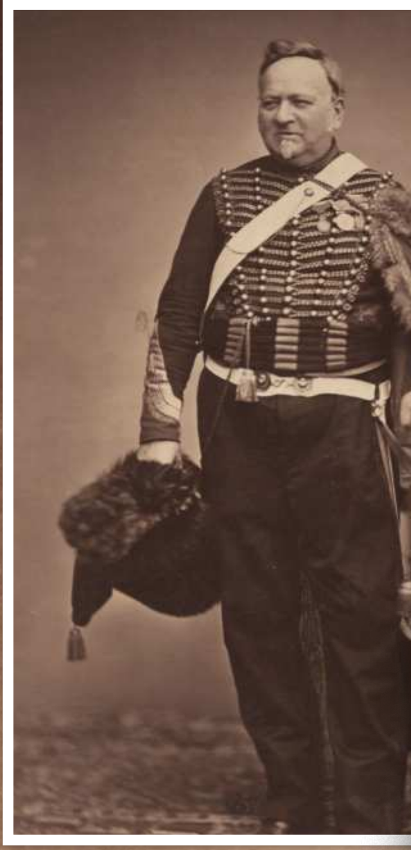
As can be expected, these advantages were not to everybody's taste. An officer serving for Marshal Ney wrote in his memoirs, "The Imperial Guard has it good. It was unpleasant to be around its soldiers. Everything was done for them." Jealousy can be found in almost all line infantry soldiers' letters and memoirs. This feeling is understandable, especially considering the Imperial Guard lost some of its qualities over time. At first reserved for the best of the best, it eventually came to resemble a normal army corps and swelled to 100,000 men after the Russian debacle of 1812.

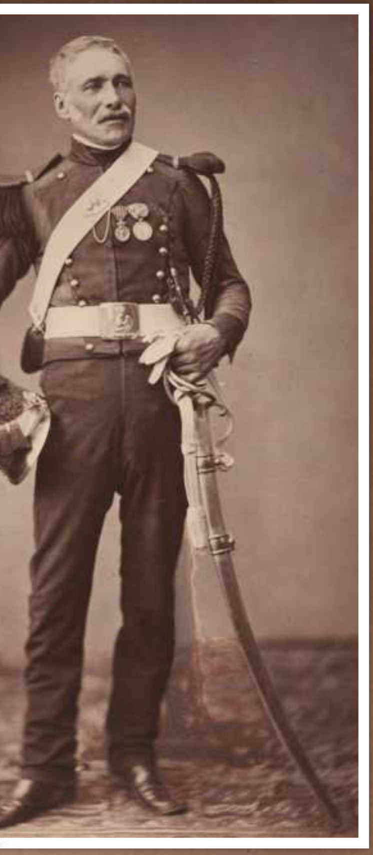
ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Napoleon was unwilling to use the Old Guard on the battlefield and kept it in reserve to strike at the decisive moment. Despite its reputation, the Old Guard did not see much action. However, during the 1805 campaign against Austria, the Sailors of the Guard saved a division of infantry at Krems. In the same campaign, the Guard's cavalry fought with distinction at the Battle of Austerlitz (2 December 1805). Grenadier Jean-Roch Coignet saw the action: "The emperor sent us forward to press



Napoleon's farewell to the Old Guard, by Antoine Montfort



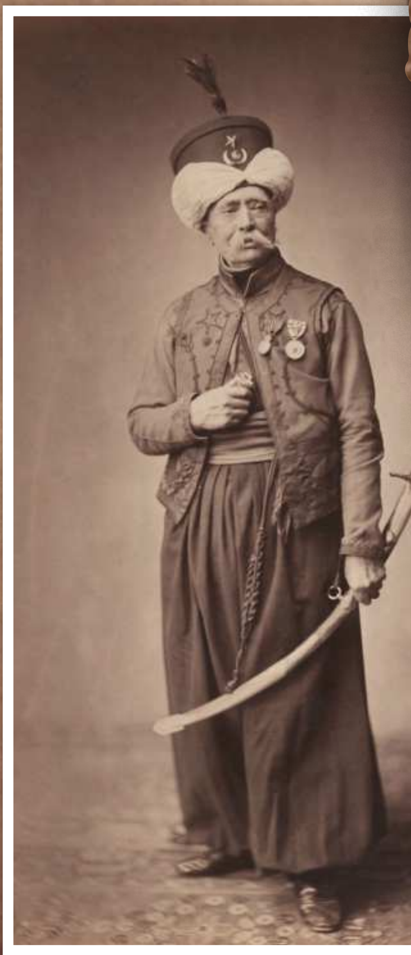


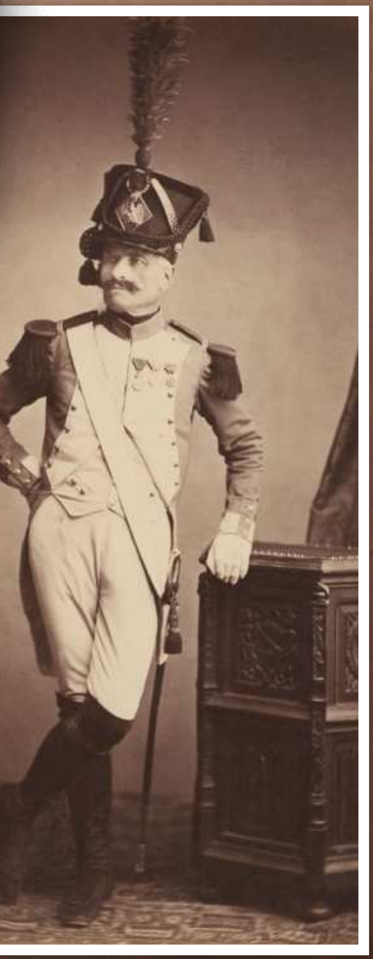
Above: A quartermaster sergeant of the mounted chasseurs of the Guard

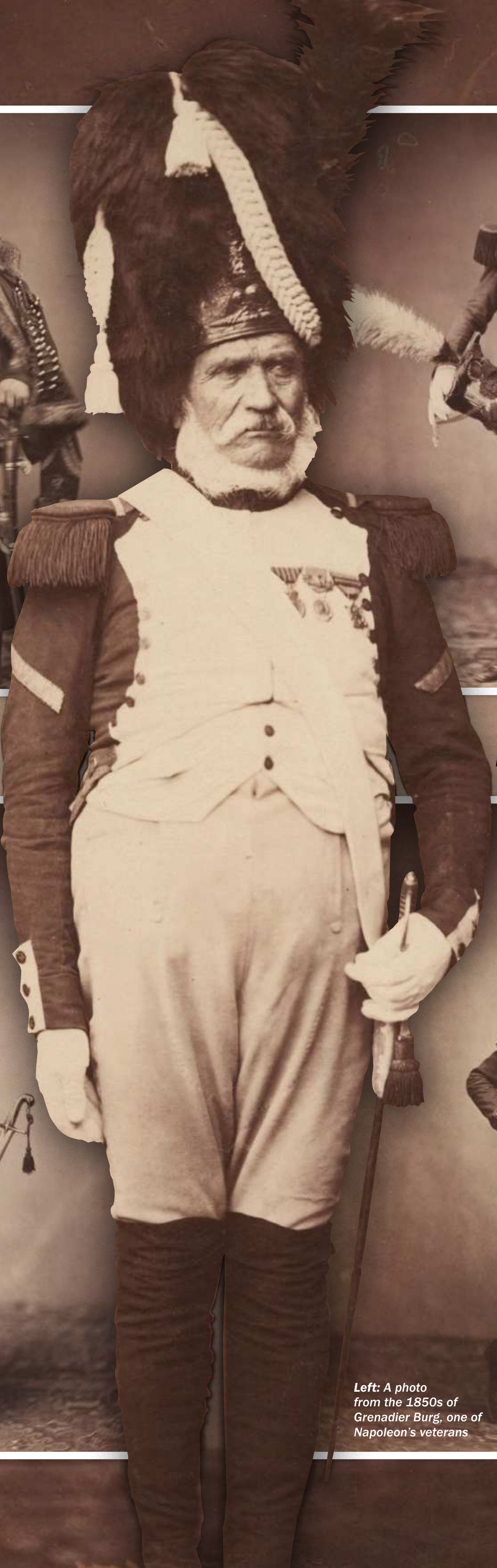
Below: Ducel, a member of the legendary Mamelukes of the Guard

Above: Dreuse, a veteran of the 2nd Light Horse Lancers, photographed in 1857

Below: a veteran of the Departmental Guard, photographed decades later in full uniform







Left: A photo from the 1850s of Grenadier Burg, one of Napoleon's veterans

"THE GUARD DIES, IT DOES NOT SURRENDER!"

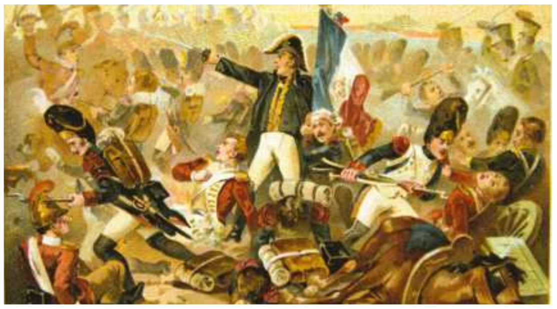
THE LEGENDARY CRY, REPORTEDLY SCREAMED BY A GENERAL OF THE OLD GUARD AT THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO, EXEMPLIFIES THE OLD GUARD'S DETERMINATION

For 200 years, historians and amateurs have been debating what General Pierre Cambronne (1770–1842), who was commanding the last of the Old Guard at the Battle of Waterloo, might have replied to the British invitation to surrender. The officer had had a long career when he fought this battle.

Born on 26 December 1770, he volunteered to join the armies of the revolution in 1792. A colonel in 1806, he became the commander of the Voltigeurs of the Guard in 1810 as well as being made a baron. Cambronne then fought with the Guard in Spain, Russia and Germany.

When Napoleon was exiled to the island of Elba, Cambronne followed as military commander. His fidelity was rewarded by the emperor, who made him a count. He was seriously wounded at the Battle of Waterloo and sent to Britain.

According to a journalist, Cambronne screamed at the British, "The Guard dies, it does not surrender!" Others, including Victor Hugo in his *Les Misérables*, argued that the gallant officer had screamed, "Merde" ('shit'). In fact, Cambronne denied both. It seems that he was in no shape to say such a thing, a fact confirmed by the British colonel who captured him. Other witnesses claim that another Old Guard general, Claude-Étienne Michel (1772–1815), who led a chasseur division and was killed at Waterloo, might have said the sentence, "The Guard dies, it does not surrender!"



the movement. We were there, 25,000 bearskin hats. The Guard and the grenadiers of Oudinot… We were walking calmly with the drums and the music. Napoleon wanted to honour the emperors commanding enemy armies by letting musicians walk with us at the centre of each battalion. Arriving at the top of the hill, we were surrounded by remnants of Corps who had been fighting since the morning.

"The Russian imperial guard was in front. The emperor made us stop and sent the Mamelukes and the Horse Chasseurs. These Mamelukes were formidable horsemen with their curved sabres. They could cut a head off with one blow. One of them came back three times to give enemy flags to the emperor.

"The third time, the emperor wanted him to stay but he left again and did not come back. He stayed on the battlefield. The chasseurs were not less worthy than the Mamelukes but they were outnumbered. The Russian imperial guard was made of determined men. Our cavalry had to be brought back. The emperor sent the black horses, the horse grenadiers…

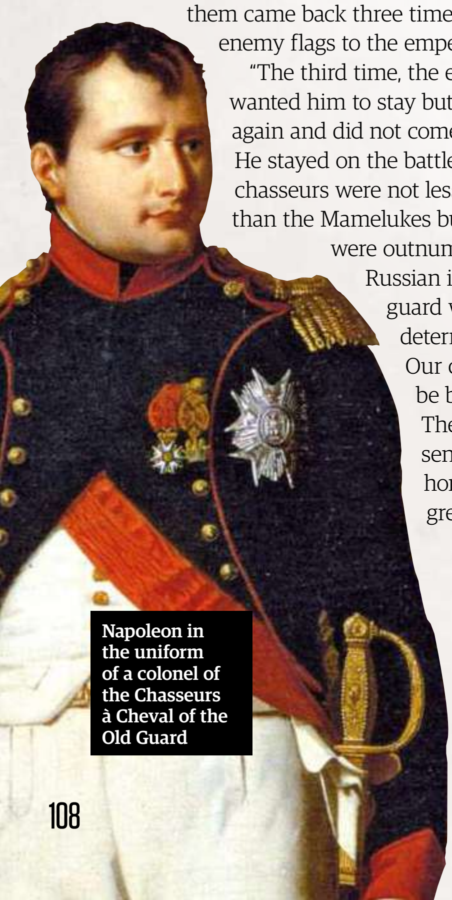
"They passed us as thunder and charged the enemy. For 15 minutes it was an unbelievable chaos, and it felt like a century. We could not see anything in the smoke and the dust. We feared to see our comrades killed. The Old Guard and the grenadiers were there to give the last blow. But smoke and dust soon disappeared. The Russian imperial guard was nowhere to be seen. Our horsemen came back triumphantly and placed themselves behind the emperor."

The cavalry of the Guard was again noticed at the Battle of Eylau on 7 February 1807. At the same battle, the infantry of the Old Guard fought valiantly right under the nose of the emperor. The first regiment of the grenadiers pushed back a Russian assault that was threatening the general headquarters and Napoleon himself. General Dorsenne, seeing one of his officers ordering a volley, screamed, "Raise your weapon! The Old Guard only uses bayonets." This counter-assault was so successful that it nearly destroyed the Russian column completely.

In 1808, elements of the Guard fought against the Madrid revolt. Most of the Imperial Guard followed the next year when Napoleon led an expedition in the Iberian Peninsula. There, the Guard experienced its first defeat when three squadrons of horse chasseurs and Mamelukes were ambushed by the British. General Lefebvre-Desnouettes, who led the chasseurs, was captured by the enemy. Napoleon was soon forced to abandon Spain to fight Austria. During the campaign of 1809, the Old Guard lost several men while protecting the French army after the Battle of Essling. A month later, the horse chasseurs and the Polish chevau-légers won new laurels against the Austrians. At the Battle of Wagram, the Polish grabbed enemy uhlans' lances to attack further. Following this legendary action, they were transformed into light-horse lancers.

On 24 June 1812 the French army invaded Russia. The Old Guard followed the emperor but was not committed until the Battle of Borodino (7 September 1812). The battle began at 6am and lasted the whole day. The Young Guard was sent into the fray at 3pm when victory was still in the balance. Several officers asked Napoleon to send the Old Guard: "Sir, you need to involve the Guard!" screamed General Rapp while he was being taken out to be treated by a doctor. "I will most definitely not. I do not want to have it blown up. I am sure to win the battle without involving it," answered Napoleon. By the end of the day, Napoleon had won a tactical victory but had failed to destroy the Russian army.

His refusal to commit the Old Guard saved the Russians from annihilation. A few days later, the Grande Armée took Moscow, but the destruction of the city proved disastrous for the French. For the first time in its history, the Old Guard pillaged surviving buildings with other regiments. A 29 September communiqué summarised the shame brought on the elite formation: "Acts of disorder and looting were committed yesterday and today by the Old Guard. The emperor is saddened to see



Napoleon in the uniform of a colonel of the Chasseurs à Cheval of the Old Guard

"THEY PASSED US AS THUNDER AND CHARGED THE ENEMY. FOR 15 MINUTES IT WAS AN UNBELIEVABLE CHAOS, AND IT FELT LIKE A CENTURY" that elite soldiers charged with his safety, who should behave at their best in all circumstances, commit such actions. Some broke the doors of the depots where flour was kept for the army. Others willingly disobeyed and mistreated guards and their commanders…"

Soldiers of the Guard not only stole food but also a large amount of booty. Their lack of discipline was noticed by the rest of the army and triggered widespread hostility. After the Russian campaign, an officer wrote to the war minister to complain, "The Guard has lost its reputation and is unanimously hated."

The retreat following the destruction of Moscow was disastrous for the French army, but the Imperial Guard was the only branch to keep some cohesion. However, various engagements resulted in the deaths of several men.

At the Battle of Krasnoi on 15-18 November 1812 (which cost the French over 6,000 men) the 3rd Grenadiers began the day with 305 soldiers and officers but ended it with just 36 survivors. At the beginning of the campaign, 180 officers and 6,235 soldiers of the Imperial Guard had crossed the Niemen River. Months later, only 177 officers and 1,312 troops were still alive to cross it again. All cavalry units had been wiped out.

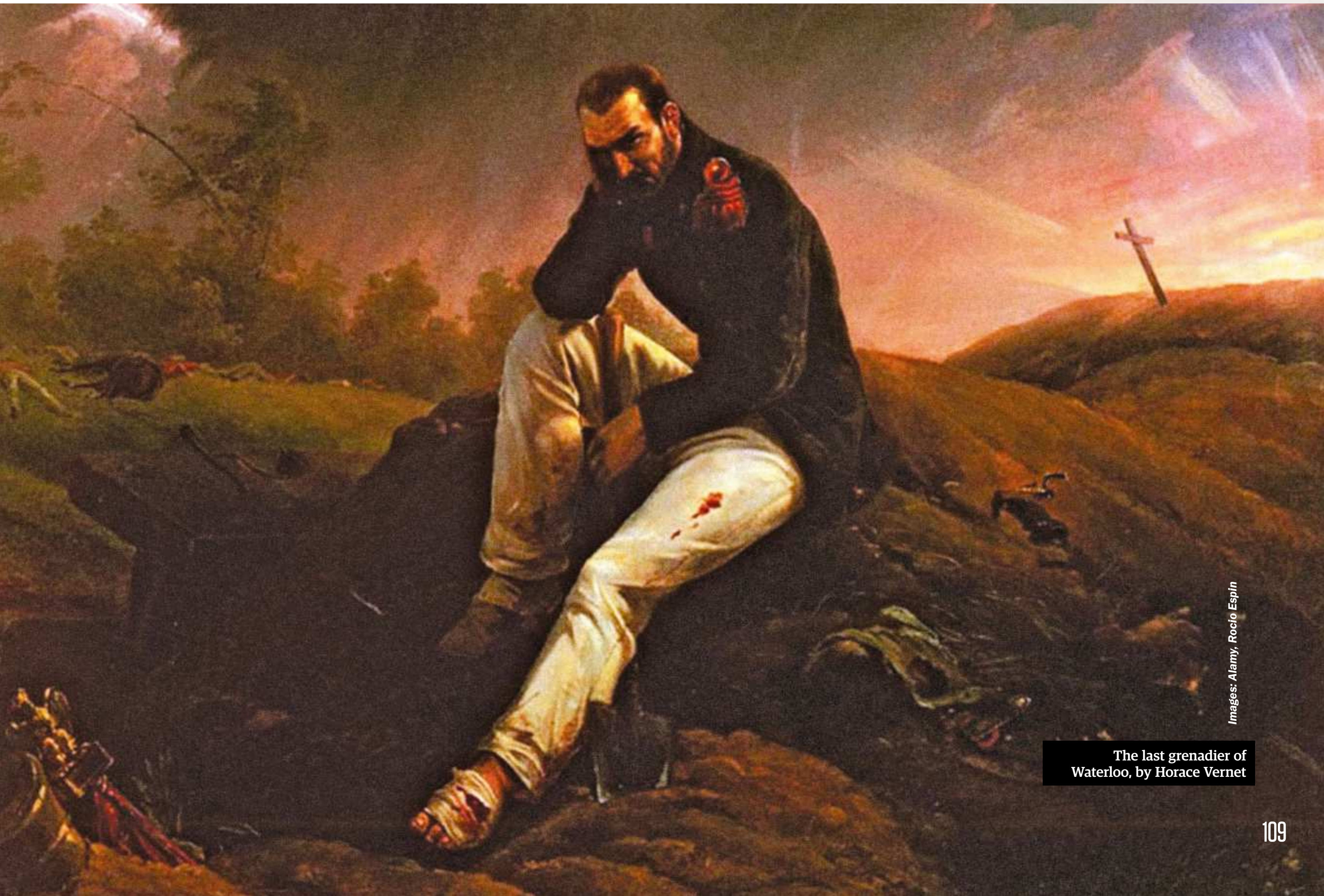
The Imperial Guard was rebuilt from scratch, but finding men was not an easy task. The letter of a soldier serving in a line infantry regiment shows that the best soldiers were invited to apply for the Imperial Guard. However, most hesitated as it was rumoured that the guardsmen were headed for Spain. During the campaign of 1813, the Old Guard was only used during the Battle of Hanau (30 October 1813). After the Battle of Leipzig, the French had retreated towards France when they were stopped by the Bavarian army led by Marshal von Wrede. The Bavarian general wanted to block Napoleon's retreat. This time, Napoleon did not hesitate to commit his best men. He sent the Imperial Guard, both Young and Old, to clear the enemy. The following victory was important for Napoleon, as it allowed the French to retreat and oppose the invasion of France.

Pressed by the allies, Napoleon did not have time to bring the Old Guard back to its former glory. Nonetheless, French guardsmen distinguished themselves during the campaign of 1814. The French emperor wrote on the evening of the Battle of Montmirail that "my old foot guard and horse guard worked miracles. What they achieved can only be compared to what is found in chivalric tales." The same day, he wrote to his brother: "All of this was achieved by sending half of my Old Guard, who did more than what can be expected of men. My foot guard, dragoons, horse grenadiers, worked miracles." Despite inflicting several defeats, Napoleon was unable to stop the enemy coalition from advancing on Paris. On 4 April 1814 he abdicated in favour of his son before being forced to sign the Treaty of Fontainebleau on 13 April. He was sent to the island of Elba with 724 soldiers of the Old Guard.

The remaining regiments were renamed. The Foot Grenadiers became the French Grenadiers, the Horse Grenadiers the Corps of Royal French Cuirassiers, the Chasseurs à Cheval the Corps of Royal Chasseurs, the Dragoons the Corps of Royal Dragoons of France, the 2nd Chevau-légers the Corps of Royal Chevau-légers Lancers of France.

Napoleon didn't remain in exile for very long. On 1 March 1815 he landed in France, and on 20 March he arrived in Paris and signed an imperial decree to re-establish the Imperial Guard. Missing crucial commanders, the elite formation was a shadow of its former self. Soon, many of its members would lose their lives in a field in Belgium.

The authors would like to thank Arnaud Springuel and Waterloo Immersion (**www.waterlooimmersion.be**) for the help received.


The last grenadier of Waterloo, by Horace Vernet

Images: Alamy, Rocio Espin

A Gurkha stands guard during a training exercise in Kabul, 2004

THE GURKHAS

200 YEARS ON THE FRONTLINE

FOR TWO CENTURIES, BRITAIN HAS BEEN ABLE TO CALL UPON ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST RESPECTED AND FEARED MILITARY ELITES

Although the Gurkhas and British initially met as enemies during the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-16, this was just the start of a military partnership that has stood the test of time. During this time, fighting with, rather than against, the British, the Gurkhas have proved to be among the most dedicated, disciplined and effective troops in the world and have served the crown loyally for two centuries.

In 2009, the Brigade of Gurkhas and Gurkha veterans became the centre of attention regarding the rights of Gurkha veterans to settle in the UK. With the celebrity backing of Joanna Lumley, the campaign was victorious. Six years later a far bigger crisis affected Gurkha families and veterans when a catastrophic earthquake struck Nepal, killing thousands and leaving many more homeless. The Gurkha Welfare Trust and other charitable organisations supported veterans and their families, but the threat of another quake hangs over Nepal.

Since the first recruits were signed in 1815, the Gurkhas have seen service - alongside British and Allied troops or on their own - from the harsh terrain of Afghanistan to the crowded streets of Hong Kong, the deserts of North Africa and the jungles of Borneo. Whether on the shores of Gallipoli, the slopes at Cassino or the brutal wilderness of Helmand Province, wherever the Gurkhas have gone, they have left an indelible mark on their enemies. They remain equally feared and respected the world over to this day.

"KAATAR HUNNU BHANDA MARNU RAMRO"

"BETTER TO DIE THAN LIVE A COWARD"

ORIGINS AND THE EMPIRE

THE BRITISH AND THE GURKHAS FIRST MET IN 1814 NOT AS FRIENDS, BUT AS ENEMIES

The British Empire was formally introduced to the Gurkhas at the Battle of Kalunga on 31 October 1814. It was not a pleasant experience for the British, as the 650 Nepalese soldiers, ensconced in a hill fort, resisted some 4,000 British and Indian troops for almost a month, killing Major General Sir Rollo Gillespie in the process. The clash did, however, engender a mutual respect that lasts to this day. Within a year of the fight the British were recruiting these tough mountain warriors, even though the war with the Nepalese would rumble on until March 1816.

War between Nepal and Britain was inevitable; both were pursuing an expansionist policy in northern India. The seriousness with which the British viewed the threat from Nepal was illustrated by the size of the force despatched to subdue the land. No less than 30,000 soldiers, 12,000 Indian auxiliaries and 60 guns were amassed for a job that took two years and ended with the Treaty of Segauli. This paved the way for the formation of official Gurkha battalions within the private army of the East India Company, but the first men had actually been recruited the previous year.

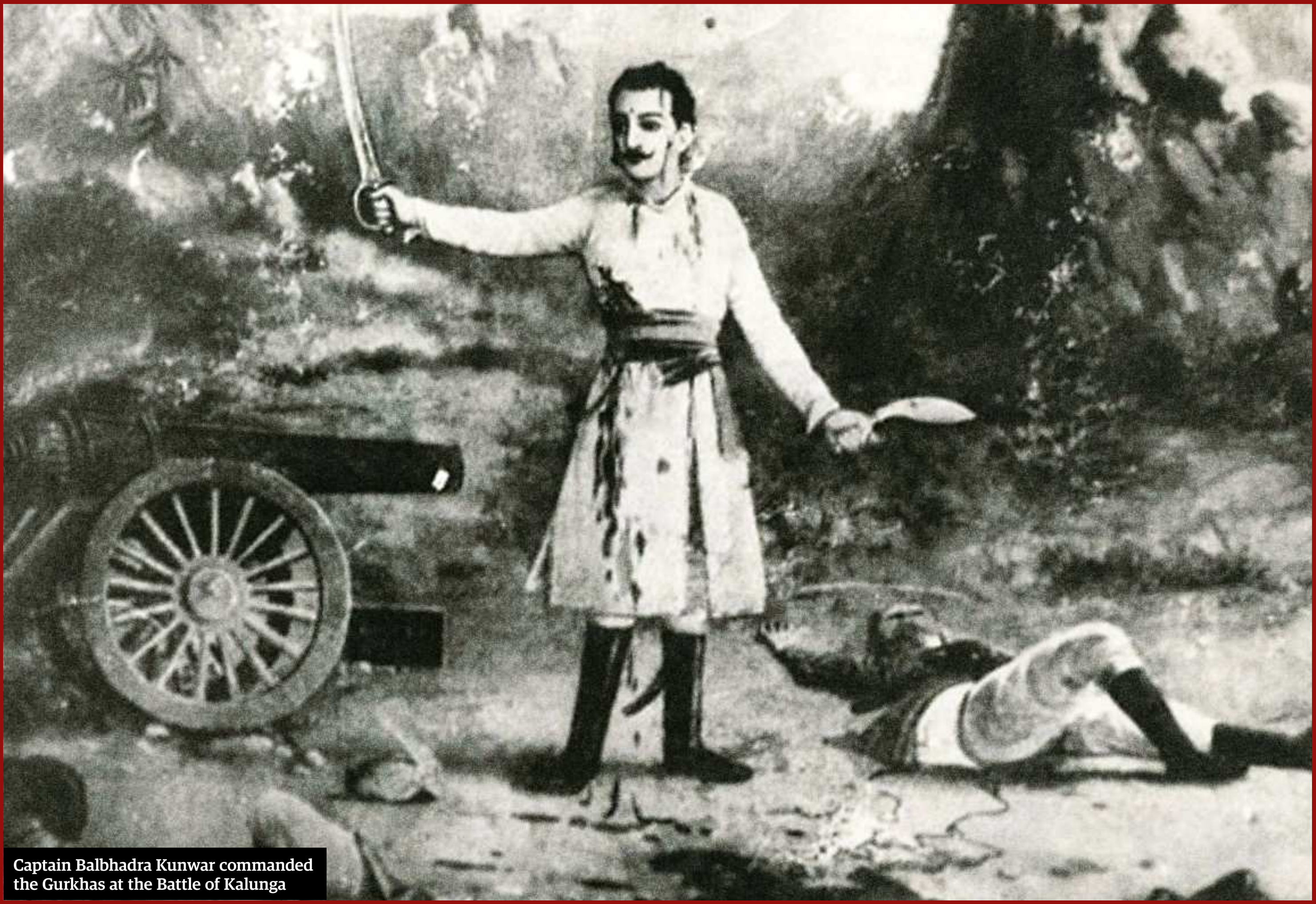
The Gurkhas fitted neatly into the developing British ideology of the 'martial races' - tribes and nations that were perceived to have a peculiar aptitude for warfare. Already encompassing the Scottish Highlanders, the theory now embraced the Gurkhas and would later accept the Sikhs. The British, however, did not recognise all of Nepal as worthy of this distinction.

The country had been unified in the second half of the 18th century by Prithvi Narayan, who expanded from his power base at Ghorka. After unification, Nepal had continued to push its borders outwards, attracting first the attention and then the suspicion of the British.

Distinct regional identities remained, of course, and the British were most impressed by three groups: the Gurung, the Magars and the Chhetri from the temperate region of Nepal known as the 'Hills'. The Gurung and Magars are of Mongolian origin, while the Chhetri trace their roots back to Indian immigrants from the 12th century.

Four battalions were formed and accepted into the army of the East India Company in April 1816: the Sirmoor Battalion, the Kumaon Battalion and two Nusseree (friendly) battalions. They settled down to garrison life in northern India, probably not suspecting that their descendants would still be serving in British forces 200 years later.

> **"IT WAS NOT A PLEASANT EXPERIENCE FOR THE BRITISH, AS THE 650 NEPALESE SOLDIERS, ENSCONCED IN A HILL FORT, RESISTED SOME 4,000 BRITISH AND INDIAN TROOPS FOR ALMOST A MONTH"**



Captain Balbhadra Kunwar commanded the Gurkhas at the Battle of Kalunga

GURKHA RECRUITS

AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, GAINING ENTRY TO ONE OF THE WORLD'S ELITE UNITS IS NOT EASY, AND MANY THOUSANDS FAIL EACH YEAR

The first Gurkha recruits were accepted by Lieutenant Frederick Young, who had participated in the siege at Kalunga, but official recruitment started with the adoption of the first four Gurkha battalions a year later. Initially, recruits sometimes had to be smuggled out of Nepal as there was no co-operation from the Nepalese authorities. Recruitment was still discouraged as late as 1885, but it has since evolved into a highly ritualised format that ensures only the very finest enter the British Army.

The Doko Race is considered the most challenging element of the selection process

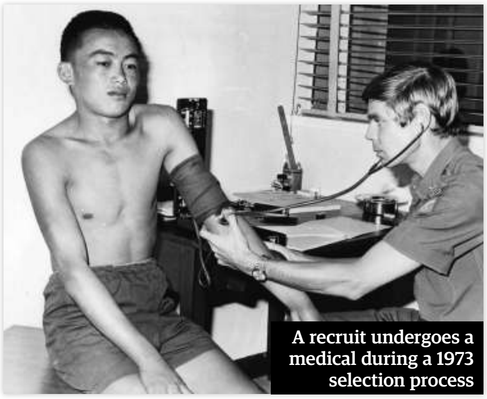
OPEN-DOOR POLICY

While it's true that recruitment initially focused on the areas identified by the British as home to so-called 'martial' tribes, this distinction has long been dropped. Now, the British Army welcomes applicants from all parts of Nepal, and the recruitment process promises candidates a "free, fair and transparent" assessment.

INITIAL PHASE

The process gets under way with an advertising campaign that starts in April. 'Galah wallas' (now known as 'senior recruit assistants') travel the country to explain how the recruitment process works. The appropriate age (between 17 and a half and 21 years of age), height (minimum of 158 centimetres), weight (minimum of 50 kilograms), chest size (at least 79 centimetres) and education (the equivalent of five mid-grade GCSEs) are essential in order to progress. Candidates must also have no more than four fillings or missing teeth.

A military doctor examines a potential recruit in 1902



A recruit undergoes a medical during a 1973 selection process

REGIONAL SELECTION

July and September see those recruits who have made it through the initial phase move on to the Regional Selection process. Two bases, in Pokhara and Dharan, are used for this stage. Over a full day, recruits are given more thorough physical and medical examinations and are interviewed by both Nepalese and British Gurkha officers. The top 250 recruits from each station are forwarded to the final stage - a small return from the many thousands who apply each year.

CENTRAL SELECTION

The three-week selection process that takes place at Pokhara is known as Central Selection. In 2014, almost 8,000 applicants had been whittled down to just 500 by this stage. Only 230 would be offered places in the British Army.

Candidates must cover an 800-metre run in no more than two minutes and 40 seconds and a 1.5-mile run in no more than nine minutes and 40 seconds, as well as performing at least 70 sit-ups in a two-minute period and at least 12 underarm pull-ups.

THE DOKO RACE

The last physical test of Central Selection is a five-kilometre run, including a 400-metre ascent, in a 48-minute time limit. A final twist asks the recruits to haul a 'doko' (a basket carried by a strap around the forehead) weighing 25 kilograms. Many recruits collapse after completing the course, and they won't hear whether they were under the time limit until the following day.

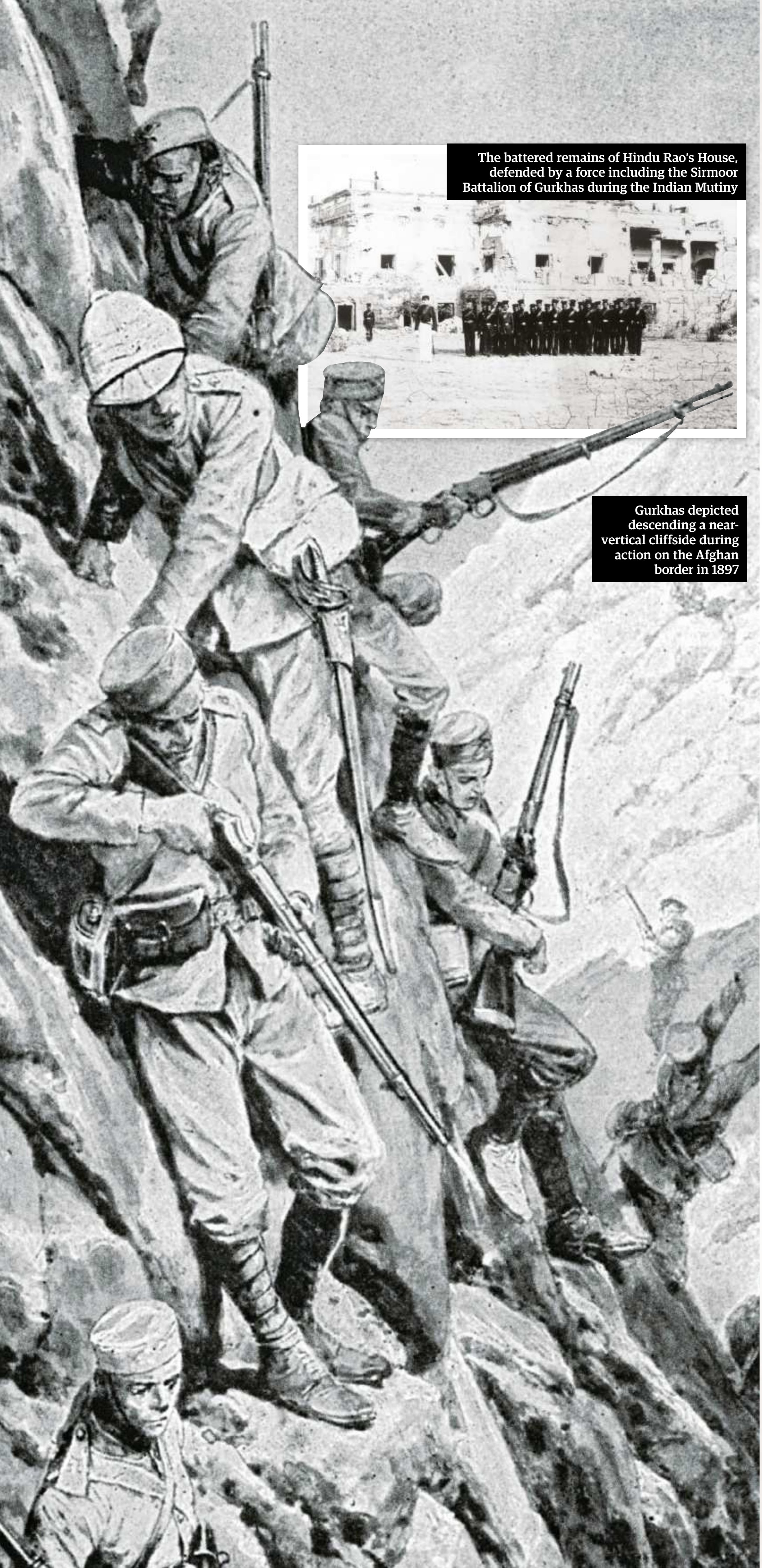
THE EXAM

As well as being tested physically, the young men must also demonstrate mental ability. The need to quickly understand and follow orders in English is of paramount importance, and the written tests are almost as daunting as the doko race.

An essay of two pages or so must be written on a given subject, while a comprehension test involves listening to a lengthy speech given by an English officer and then demonstrating a solid understanding of exactly what has been said.

A soldier from the 9th Gurkhas demonstrates the use of the kukri

The battered remains of Hindu Rao's House, defended by a force including the Sirmoor Battalion of Gurkhas during the Indian Mutiny



Gurkhas depicted descending a near-vertical cliffside during action on the Afghan border in 1897

FRONTIER FIGHTERS

GARRISON DUTY MIGHT SOUND DULL – IT WAS ANYTHING BUT FOR THE GURKHAS

The Gurkhas began their history with the British as garrison soldiers in northern India. The British, unsurprisingly, viewed them as the ideal soldiers for operations in this rugged landscape. The four battalions had become three following the merging of the two Nusseree units. The new Nusseree Battalion was based at Dharamsala, the Sirmoor Battalion at Dehra Dun and the Kumaon Battalion at Almorah.

The first serious engagement involving the Gurkhas saw 350 men of the Sirmoor Battalion capture an insurgent stronghold near Koonja in October 1824. As well as showcasing the fighting abilities of the Gurkhas (the insurgents, known as 'dacoits', put up fierce resistance and outnumbered the Gurkhas by more than two to one), it also added a layer to Gurkha tradition when an improvised battering ram was used to get into the fort: a silver ram's head is still displayed on the cross-belts of officers in the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

The Siege of Bhurtpore in 1826 saw 200 men from the Nusseree and Sirmoor Battalions serve as skirmishers to screen the men who were placing a massive mine beneath the city walls, while the First Anglo-Sikh War of 1846 saw the Nusseree and Sirmoor battalions engaged in heavy fighting at the battles of Aliwal and Sobraon, with both battalions taking severe casualties.

The Indian Mutiny of 1857 gave the Gurkhas the chance to demonstrate not only their fighting qualities but also their loyalty. The heroic three-month defence of Hindu Rao's House on the outskirts of Delhi - in which 650 men of the Sirmoor Battalion suffered a casualty rate in excess of 50 per cent - cemented their reputation, and the battalion later participated in the re-taking of Delhi. Tangible reward came in the form of the Queen's Truncheon, still an object of great pride for today's Royal Gurkha Rifles.

The Gurkhas played only a minor role in the First Afghan War of 1839–42 but were heavily involved in the second (1878–80). Britain, concerned that Russia might use Afghanistan as a route into India, was highly suspicious of any apparent harmony between the Afghans and Russia and put an army together in 1878 to tackle the problem. Now numbering five regiments, the Gurkhas were an integral part of the army, and the units took it in turns to distinguish themselves in engagements at Peiwar Kotal, Kabul and Kandahar.

More action followed with the Black Mountain Campaign of 1888, the Tirah Campaign of 1897–98 and the expedition into Tibet of 1903. It was a turbulent time for the Gurkhas, but there was much more to come.

THE GREAT WAR: 1914–18

FROM TRENCHES TO DESERT, THE GURKHAS' EXPERIENCES IN WORLD WAR I WERE VARIED

The outbreak of World War I saw Gurkha numbers increase dramatically. From a starting point of ten two-battalion regiments (each styled 'Gurkha Rifles'), numbers swelled throughout the conflict and a total of 90,780 fought in various theatres, with more than 6,000 losing their lives.

Six of the existing 20 battalions were sent to Europe as part of the Indian Corps, with Second Battalion, 8th Gurkha Rifles being the first to see front-line action on 29 October 1914. Although better suited to their native environment, the Gurkhas adapted to the very different experience of European warfare as best they could, but losses were high. Just a day after going into action, 2/8th had suffered more than 200 casualties.

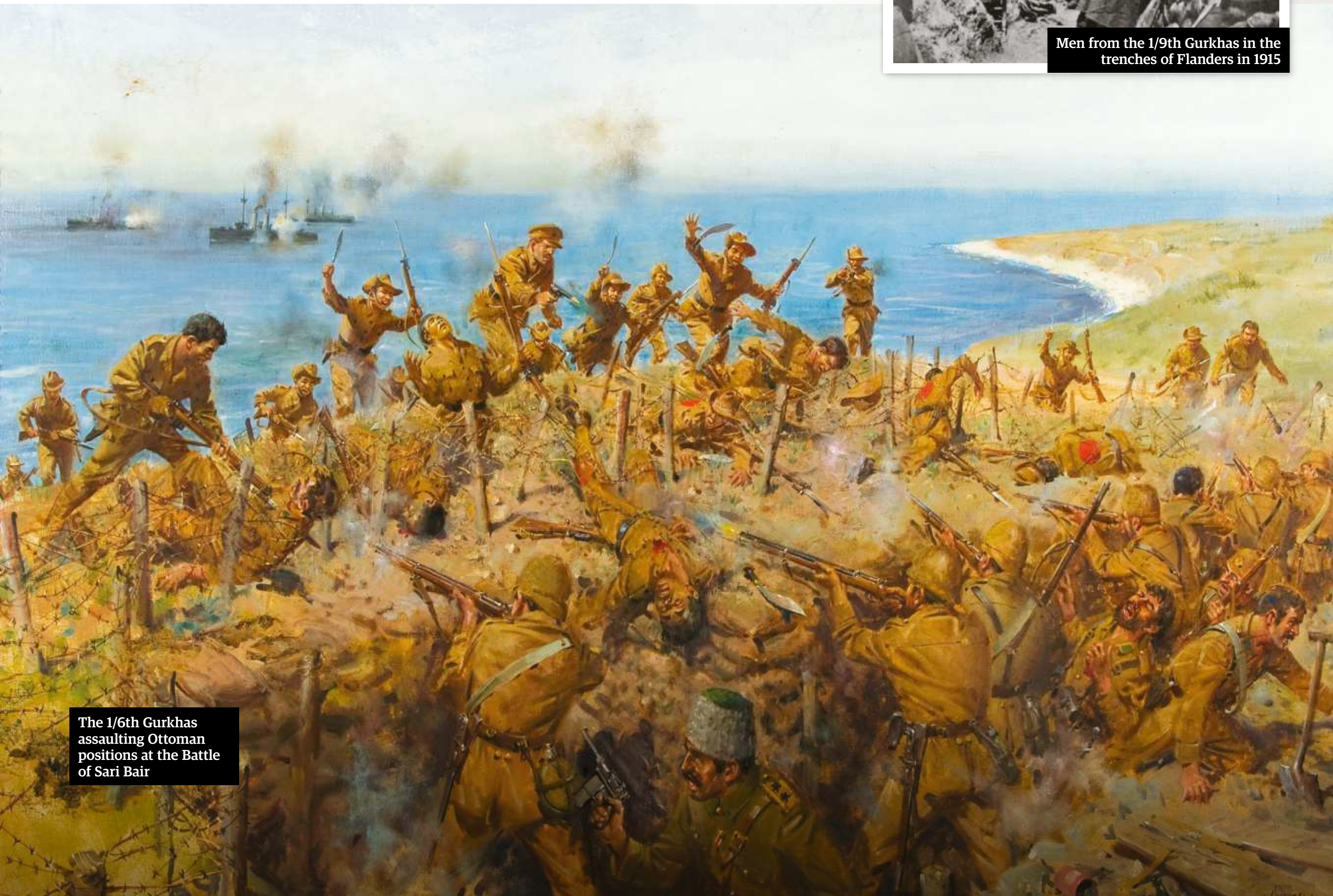
In April 1915, three further Gurkha battalions played their part in operations at Gallipoli, having been specifically requested by General Sir Ian Hamilton to join the fighting. The Gurkha battalions suffered terribly in the desperate battle, with 2/10th experiencing a shocking 40 per cent casualty rate over a seven-week period.

In Mesopotamia (now Iraq), 2/7th Gurkha Rifles was part of the 12th Division commanded by Major General George F Gorringe. In a move along the Euphrates River and subsequent actions against Turkish positions at Nasiriya in June-July 1915, 2/7th lost almost half its men, with illness and the harsh climate taking as heavy a toll as the defending Turks. The regiment was captured by the Turks on 29 September 1916 following an ill-advised push on the Iraqi capital of Baghdad.

Five Gurkha battalions played their part in the subsequent capture of Baghdad by General Frederick Maude. A 165,000-strong army first pushed the Turks out of Kut and then marched on to take Baghdad in March 1917. The Palestine Campaign also saw heavy Gurkha involvement, with General Sir Edmund Allenby's army including six Gurkha battalions.

Gurkhas are seen here sharpening their kukris in France during the Great War

Men from the 1/9th Gurkhas in the trenches of Flanders in 1915



The 1/6th Gurkhas assaulting Ottoman positions at the Battle of Sari Bair

GURKHA HEROES OF WWII

GURKHA NUMBERS AGAIN EXPANDED DRAMATICALLY AS THE WORLD WENT TO WAR FOR A SECOND TIME IN 1939

Taken during WWII, this picture is a re-creation of men from the 9th Gurkhas advancing in North Africa with kukris drawn

The escalating nature of World War II saw the British call on an increasing supply of Gurkhas for operations in various theatres. Third, fourth and even fifth battalions were added to existing regiments throughout the war in order to boost the numbers available.

Principle areas in which the Gurkhas saw action during the war included North Africa, the Middle East, Italy and Burma. In all regions, the Gurkhas' reputation for hardiness and courage was enhanced. More than 2,000 gallantry medals were awarded, including 12 Victoria Crosses, with no fewer than eight VCs awarded in 1944 alone.

The Gurkhas experienced mixed fortunes. In North Africa, Gurkha units engaged in a to-and-fro struggle with Rommel's Afrika Korps, with two battalions being captured during the German assault on Tobruk. In Italy, Gurkhas took part in fierce fighting in a doomed attempt to capture the German-held monastery at Cassino, while in the Malay Peninsula three battalions were taken prisoner by the Japanese.

There were victories as well, of course. Gurkha units took part in the successful British offensive against Rommel, five battalions helped defend the critical bridge over the Sittang River as Japanese troops pushed on Rangoon, and Gurkhas were also prominent in the Chindit operations in Burma.

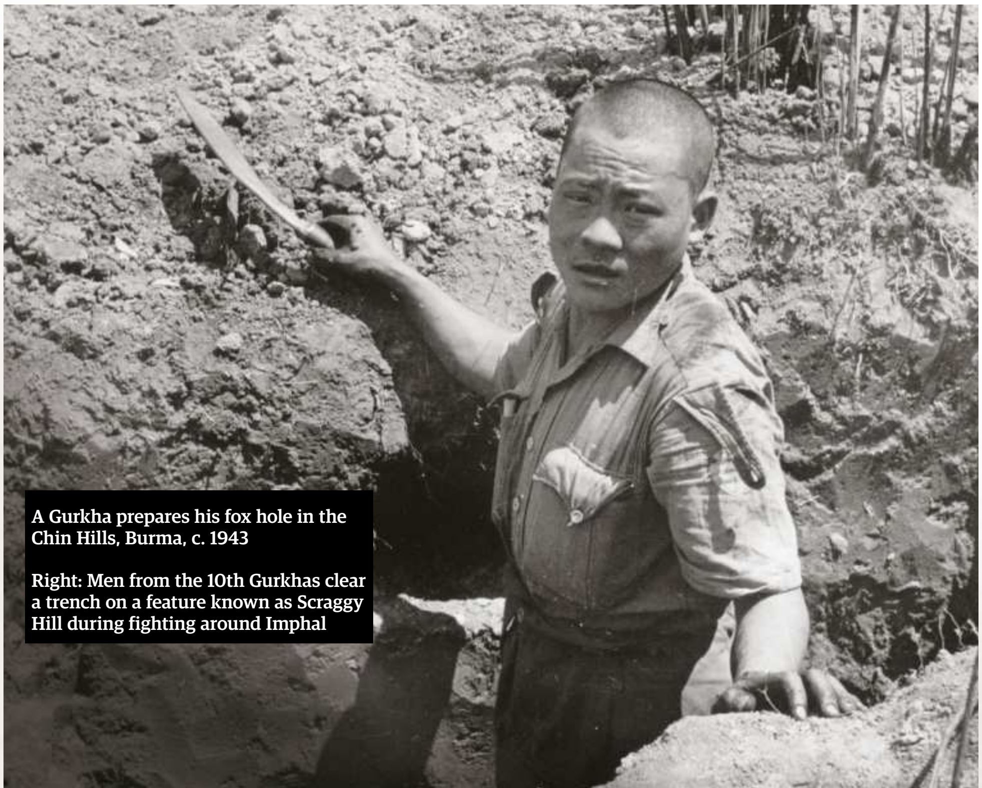
It is worth noting the extraordinary co-operation of the nation of Nepal in this effort. Recruitment into the Nepalese Army was suspended to fulfil British requests and approximately 138,000 Gurkhas served during the war, with more than 7,500 losing their lives and a further 1,441 declared missing, presumed dead.

SUBEDAR LALBAHADUR THAPA
NORTH AFRICA

During the British assault on Wadi Akarit in April 1942, a division under Major General Francis Tuker advanced up a mountain known as the Fatnassa Massif, with Gurkha units to the fore. Subedar Lalbahadur Thapa, from D Company, 1/2nd Gurkhas, single-handedly knocked out one German machine-gun position and then attacked a second with his kukri, opening up the enemy position for Tuker's division and winning the Victoria Cross in the process.

48TH BRIGADE
SOUTHEAST ASIA

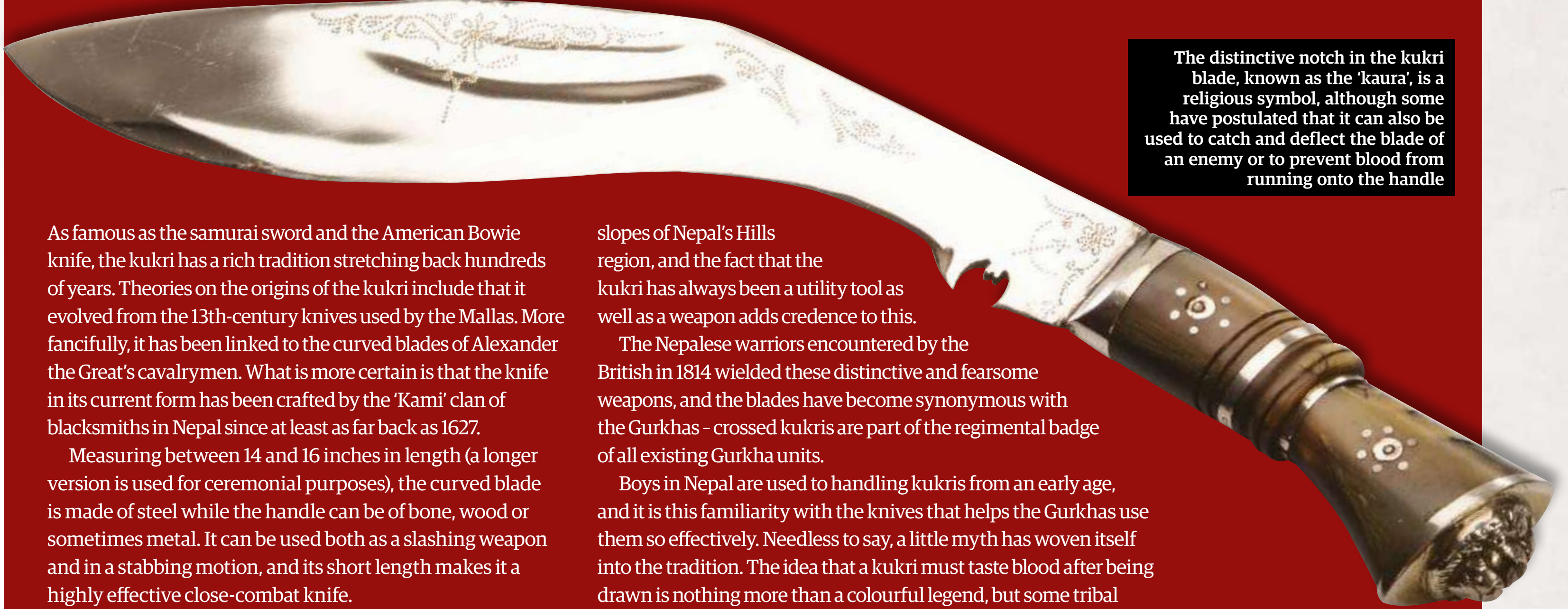
As British forces fell back before the Japanese advance through Burma in 1942, there was a very real danger of the entire force being captured,as Japanese units attempted to cut off the retreat. The 48th Brigade, at the time an all-Gurkha unit, formed the rearguard as the British force retreated towards India. Already severely weakened from earlier actions (1/3rd Gurkhas had lost more than 500 men out of its original strength of 750), the Gurkhas nevertheless held the Japanese at bay and the battered army reached safety.


A Gurkha prepares his fox hole in the Chin Hills, Burma, c. 1943

Right: Men from the 10th Gurkhas clear a trench on a feature known as Scraggy Hill during fighting around Imphal

THE KUKRI

THE GURKHAS' ICONIC KNIVES ARE INSTANTLY RECOGNISABLE, BY FRIEND AND FOE ALIKE



The distinctive notch in the kukri blade, known as the 'kaura', is a religious symbol, although some have postulated that it can also be used to catch and deflect the blade of an enemy or to prevent blood from running onto the handle

As famous as the samurai sword and the American Bowie knife, the kukri has a rich tradition stretching back hundreds of years. Theories on the origins of the kukri include that it evolved from the 13th-century knives used by the Mallas. More fancifully, it has been linked to the curved blades of Alexander the Great's cavalrymen. What is more certain is that the knife in its current form has been crafted by the 'Kami' clan of blacksmiths in Nepal since at least as far back as 1627.

Measuring between 14 and 16 inches in length (a longer version is used for ceremonial purposes), the curved blade is made of steel while the handle can be of bone, wood or sometimes metal. It can be used both as a slashing weapon and in a stabbing motion, and its short length makes it a highly effective close-combat knife.

One theory for the stubby design of the knife is that anything longer would have proved unwieldy on the steep slopes of Nepal's Hills region, and the fact that the kukri has always been a utility tool as well as a weapon adds credence to this.

The Nepalese warriors encountered by the British in 1814 wielded these distinctive and fearsome weapons, and the blades have become synonymous with the Gurkhas - crossed kukris are part of the regimental badge of all existing Gurkha units.

Boys in Nepal are used to handling kukris from an early age, and it is this familiarity with the knives that helps the Gurkhas use them so effectively. Needless to say, a little myth has woven itself into the tradition. The idea that a kukri must taste blood after being drawn is nothing more than a colourful legend, but some tribal groups did believe that it was disrespectful of the blade not to put it to use after being drawn, even if only to slice vegetables.

FIRST BATTALION, 9TH GURKHAS
MEDITERRANEAN

During fierce fighting at Cassino in March 1944, 1/9th Gurkhas was part of the 4th Indian Division tasked with capturing a point of high ground below the German-held monastery of Monte Cassino. The ground, ominously named 'Hangman's Hill', was taken by the Gurkhas and held for nine days despite constant artillery bombardment from the Germans. Despite their bravery, Monte Cassino could not be taken and the Gurkhas were forced to withdraw from their hard-earned position.

RIFLEMAN SHER BAHADUR THAPA
MEDITERRANEAN

Courage can be displayed in many ways, as Rifleman Sher Bahadur Thapa of 1/9th Gurkhas proved in September 1944. Spotting a wounded Gurkha, Thapa braved enemy gunfire to sprint out and pick up his fallen comrade, returning him to safety. Thapa had already charged a German machine-gun post, knocking it out of action, but his luck ran out when attempting to rescue a second fallen comrade, as he died in a hail of machine-gun fire. His family received his posthumous Victoria Cross the following year.

RIFLEMAN TULBAHADUR PUN
SOUTHEAST ASIA

As well as collective achievement, the Second Chindit Operation saw many instances of personal bravery. Rifleman Tulbahadur Pun won his Victoria Cross during an attack on a railway bridge at Mogaung in June 1944. Finding himself the only unwounded member of his section, he picked up a Bren gun and attacked a key Japanese position known as the 'Red House'. Eventually capturing the position, he then continued to provide supporting fire while the rest of his platoon advanced.

SUBEDAR NETRABAHADUR THAPA
SOUTHEAST ASIA

The defence of Mortar Bluff in June 1944 may have ended in failure, but it is rightfully remembered as one of the Gurkhas' finest hours. Subedar Netrabahadur Thapa commanded a small defensive unit against a Japanese attack, taking the fight to the Japanese when supplied with fresh ammunition and grenades. Thapa was killed during the counterattack and the position was taken by the Japanese, but his bravery (he was found the next day still holding his kukri) earned him a posthumous Victoria Cross.

RIFLEMAN BHANBHAGTA GURUNG
SOUTHEAST ASIA

During fighting in Burma in March 1945 Rifleman Bhanbhagta Gurung proved to be a one-man army. After first coolly despatching a Japanese sniper, Gurung went on to single-handedly attack five Japanese positions, including four foxholes and a machine-gun post. Using his rifle, bayonet, grenades and kukri, he helped his unit secure a vital foothold.

THE NEXT GENERATION OF GURKHAS

POST-WORLD WAR II, THE GURKHAS HAVE RISEN TO MYRIAD CHALLENGES DESPITE EVER-DECREASING NUMBERS

Following Indian Independence in 1947, only four (2nd, 6th, 7th and 10th) of the ten Gurkha regiments joined the British Army, with the remainder staying with the Indian Army. Over nearly 70 years since the split, Gurkha numbers have been steadily cut, with a target for the current Brigade of Gurkhas of just 2,617 for 2020. Despite the steady reduction in numbers, the Gurkhas have seen action in Malaya, Brunei, Borneo, Hong Kong, the Falkland Islands, the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. They remain one of the world's elite fighting forces.

Soldiers from the 2nd The Royal Gurkha Rifles prepare for a patrol in Helmand, Afghanistan, 2011

THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY

The Gurkhas were given the chance to once more demonstrate their mastery of jungle warfare during a 12-year campaign (1948-60) against the communist terrorists (CT) of the Malayan Races Liberation Army.

In what was surely the only military campaign the British have fought against an enemy commander who possessed an MBE (MRLA leader Chin Peng had been recognised for his efforts when fighting the Japanese during World War II), the Gurkhas recovered from early setbacks to force CT units to withdraw further into the jungle. The granting of Malayan independence in 1957 also removed much of the impetus behind the MRLA cause.

THE BORNEO CONFRONTATION

More jungle warfare came when Indonesian-backed forces pushed into Borneo in 1963. The Indonesian Border Terrorists (IBT) was commanded by Indonesian Army regulars, and more regular units became involved as the conflict progressed. The equally matched opponents waged a deadly war in the jungle, but it was only when the British stepped off the back foot (they had initially concentrated on responding to border incursions) and began moving into Indonesian territory that they started to see real progress. The formation of a Gurkha paratrooper company helped tip the balance of the three-year conflict, which cost the lives of 43 Gurkhas.

Gurkhas patrol on the Limbang River in 1965 as part of operations during the Borneo Confrontation,

THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUST

Established in 1969, the Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT, registered charity No. 1103669) is focused on providing financial and medical support for elderly Gurkha veterans and their widows in Nepal, who rely on the Trust for a secure old age. For those who are unable to live independently, it offers residential care.

The series of earthquakes that began in April 2015 devastated the Gurkha homeland - over 30,000 people were killed or injured and millions lost their homes.

With support from Gurkha soldiers despatched to Nepal, the GWT responded to provide medical aid and distribute emergency supplies in isolated rural areas.

The GWT relies on the generosity of the general public to support its welfare relief. For more information on the work of the GWT, and to donate to its Earthquake Response Fund, please visit **www.gwt.org.uk**.

AFGHANISTAN

The first Gurkha unit was deployed to Afghanistan in 2001. Having a natural affinity with the Afghans, the Gurkhas have served with distinction ever since, training Afghan National Army personnel and helping to win 'hearts and minds'. Inevitably, there has been combat as well, especially following the move into Helmand Province in 2006.

Some things, it seems, will always remain the same with the Gurkhas, as one of their most recent awards for bravery makes clear. Lance Corporal Tuljung Gurung earned a Military Cross in 2013 for seeing off two insurgents, not with his rifle but with his kukri.

The First Battalion of the Royal Gurkha Rifles demonstrate kukri fighting on 19 July 2007

THE FALKLANDS WAR

The Gurkhas' impact on the Falklands War was out of all proportion to the actual service they saw. As part of the task force assembled to liberate the islands, which Argentina had invaded in April 1982, 1/7th Gurkhas sailed on the QE2 in May.

Propaganda stories showed the Gurkhas sharpening their kukris ready for battle, and even though most of the fighting was over by the time they arrived, they had clearly put the fear of god into the Argentinians, many of who were young conscripts. In the final action around Port Stanley, Argentinian troops apparently surrendered to the Scots Guards to avoid facing the Gurkhas.

The Royal Gurkha Rifles patrol a street in Helmand Province in 2010

THE MODERN BRIGADE OF GURKHAS

THE ROYAL GURKHA RIFLES (RGR)

STRENGTH: 1,261

This two-battalion regiment of a 'light-role' battalion based in the UK and a 'jungle-role' battalion in Brunei comprises almost exactly half the strength of the Brigade of Gurkhas. Their main barracks is at Shorncliffe, and the regiment celebrates its birthday on 1 July.

THE QUEEN'S GURKHA ENGINEERS (QGE)

STRENGTH: 295

69 Gurkha Field Squadron and 70 Gurkha Field Support Squadron are headed by a Regimental HQ to make up the QGE, which is part of 36 Engineer Regiment. The history of this unit goes back to the creation of the first Gurkha sapper unit in 1948. The regiment is based at Maidstone.

THE QUEEN'S OWN GURKHA LOGISTIC REGIMENT (QOGLR)

STRENGTH: 439

The Royal Logistics Corps provides fighting forces with the supplies they need to do their job. Within this corps, ten Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment is recognised as an elite unit, comprising 1 Squadron, 28 Squadron and 36 HQ Squadron. The regiment is based at Aldershot.

QUEEN'S GURKHA SIGNALS (QGS)

STRENGTH: 484

Within the Royal Corps of Signals, a combat support arm, three squadrons comprise the Queen's Gurkha Signals, which was first established during the Malayan Emergency. Their main barracks is at Nuneaton, although the regiment also has men in Nepal, Brunei and the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in Camberley, Surrey.

THE BAND OF THE BRIGADE OF GURKHAS

STRENGTH: 45

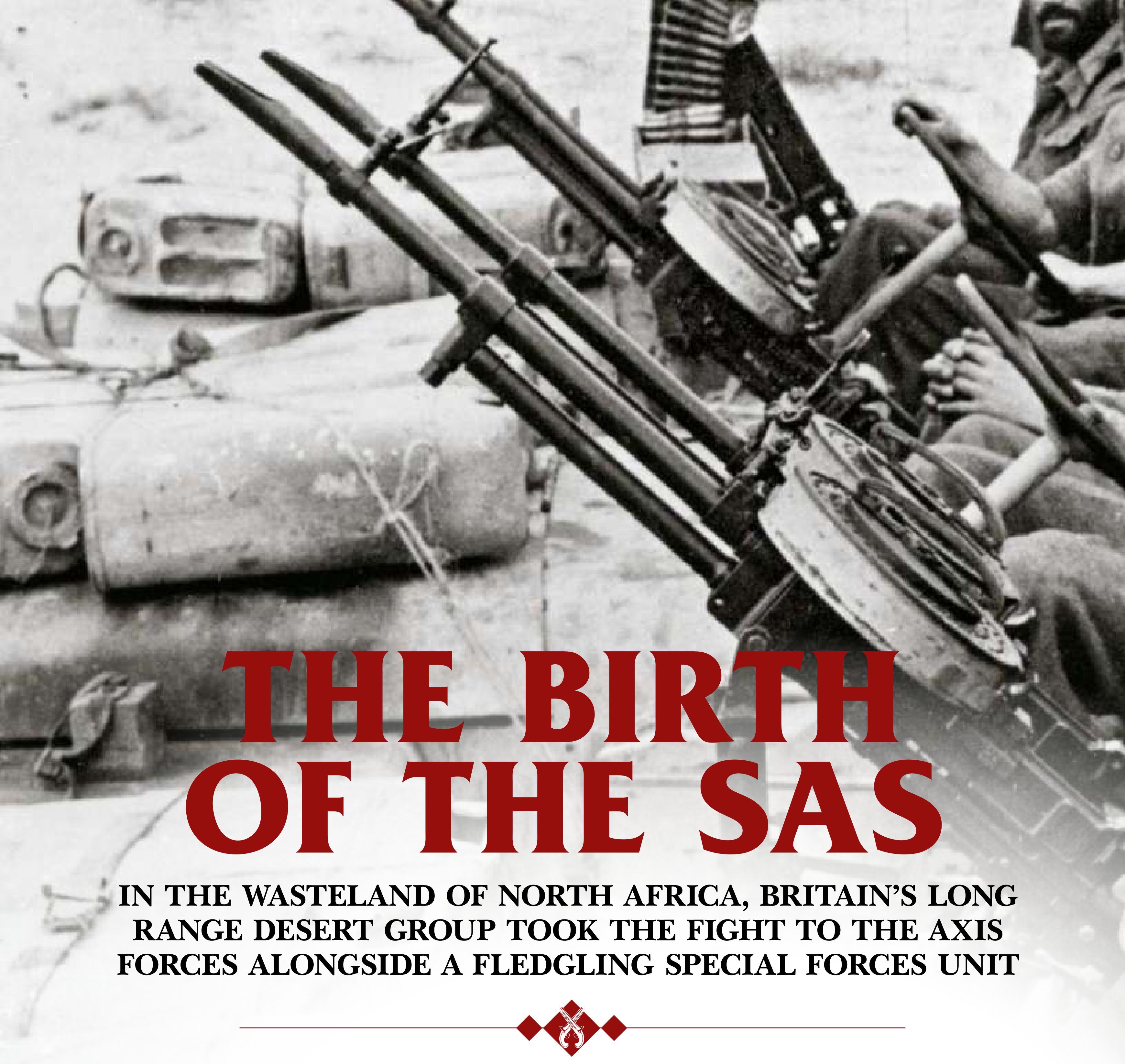
Belonging to the Brigade of Gurkhas rather than the Corps of Army Music, the Band was originally formed in 1859. New musicians needed to be found when all existing bandsmen opted to stay with Indian regiments following Indian independence in 1947, but the unit was successfully reformed in 1949. It is based at Shorncliffe.

GURKHA STAFF AND PERSONNEL SUPPORT (GSPS)

STRENGTH: 93

Formed in June 2011 (prior to this they had been known as the Gurkha Clerks), this company provides services including accounting, IT support, HR and personnel support and business administration to all units within the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Images: Crown copyright/Headquarters Brigade of Gurkhas and the Gurkha Museum, Alamy, Corbis, Getty



THE BIRTH OF THE SAS

IN THE WASTELAND OF NORTH AFRICA, BRITAIN'S LONG RANGE DESERT GROUP TOOK THE FIGHT TO THE AXIS FORCES ALONGSIDE A FLEDGLING SPECIAL FORCES UNIT

Ralph Bagnold was as unlikely a special forces commander as anyone could imagine. His war had been the Great War, when as a junior signals officer he had survived the carnage of the Western Front. When World War II began in September 1939, Bagnold was 43 and earning a comfortable living as a scientist and writer.

Recalled to the colours four years after he had retired from the army, Major Bagnold was posted to Officer Commanding, East Africa Signals, and dispatched on a troopship to Kenya. But he never arrived. In early October, Bagnold's vessel, RMS Franconia, collided with a merchant cruiser in the Mediterranean. He and the rest of his troop transferred to another vessel and sailed to Port Said in Egypt to await the first available ship to Kenya.

Bagnold was delighted. Egypt was a country he knew well, better in fact than nearly any other Briton. He had spent most of the 1920s in Egypt with his regiment, entranced by the culture and the vast desert that stretched west into Libya. In 1927, he made his first foray into the Libyan Desert, leading a small band of explorers in a fleet of Model T Fords. More expeditions followed, penetrating further into the desert's brutal interior. Bagnold's fascination was as much motivated by science as by exploration, and he began studying the terrain, leading him to publish the acclaimed *The Physics of Blown Sand and Desert Dunes* in 1939.

Back in Egypt, Bagnold took the train from Port Said to Cairo to look up old friends. He dined with one such acquaintance in the restaurant of the exclusive Shepheard's Hotel, where he was spotted by the gossip columnist of *The Egyptian Gazette* newspaper. A few days later, the word was out that Bagnold was back in town, and within a matter of days he was summoned to the office of General Archibald Wavell, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Middle East Command.

Wavell pumped Bagnold for information on the accessibility of the Libyan Desert – the general was increasingly concerned by intelligence reports that the Italians had as many as 250,000 men in 15 divisions under Marshal Rodolfo Graziani. So

impressed was he by what Bagnold told him that Wavell arranged for his permanent transfer to North Africa.

BAGNOLD'S VISION BROUGHT TO LIFE

Bagnold was sent to Mersa Matruh - 135 miles west of Cairo - where he discovered that the most up-to-date map the British forces possessed of Libya dated from 1915. He was similarly appalled by the indifference of senior officers to the threat posed by the Italians - they believed the enemy would make a full-frontal attack on Mersa Matruh, which they would easily repel, but Bagnold suspected the Italians - some of whom he had encountered during his expeditions of the 1920s - would launch surprise attacks on British positions in Egypt from further south.

Bagnold's idea was to form a small reconnaissance force to patrol the 700-mile frontier with Libya. This was rejected, as it was when he submitted it again in January 1940, and the following month Bagnold was posted as a military advisor to Turkey, presumably to give Middle East Headquarters (MEHQ) in Cairo some peace.

But Bagnold simply would not give up, and after Italy declared war on Britain on 10 June 1940, he tried for a third time to convince the top brass of the merit of his idea, explaining in an additional paragraph that there would be three patrols: "Every vehicle of which, with a crew of three and a machine gun, was to carry its own supplies of food and water for three weeks, and its own petrol for 2,500 miles of travel across average soft desert surface… [each] patrol to carry a wireless set, navigating and other equipment, medical stores, spare parts and further tools."

LRDG soldiers had to dress to stay cool in the heat of the desert

This time Bagnold entrusted his friend, Brigadier Dick Baker, to ensure the proposal was put directly into the hands of Wavell. Baker obliged, and within four days of receiving Bagnold's proposition Wavell had authorised him to form the new unit, provisionally entitled the Long Range Patrol (LRP).

Wavell was a hard taskmaster, however, giving Bagnold just six weeks to make his vision a reality. Men, equipment, rations, weapons, vehicles… it was a formidable challenge but one that Bagnold rose to. First, he searched for the soldiers; he tracked down most of his old companions from his exploration days, and while one or two were unable to secure a release from their military duty, Bagnold was soon joined in Cairo by Bill Kennedy-Shaw and Pat Clayton, who by 1940 had accumulated nearly 20 years of experience with the Egyptian Survey Department. Also recruited to the new unit was captain Teddy Mitford, a relative of the infamous sisters and a desert explorer in his own right during the late 1930s.

While Clayton, Mitford and Kennedy-Shaw started to hunt down the necessary equipment, Bagnold flew to Palestine on 29 June to see Lt-General Thomas Blamey, commander of the Australian Corps. Bagnold requested permission to recruit 80 Australian soldiers, explaining that in his view Australians would be the Allied soldiers most likely to adapt quickest to the task of desert reconnaissance. Blamey, acting on the orders of his government, refused Bagnold's request, so Bagnold instead turned to the New Zealand forces in Egypt.

This time he met with success, and 80 officers, non-commissioned officers and men from the New Zealand Divisional Cavalry Regiment and Machine-Gun Battalion promptly volunteered to be part of the LRP. Bagnold took an instant shine to the Kiwis, saying, "They made an impressive party by English standards. Tougher and more weather-beaten in looks, a sturdy basis of sheep-farmers, leavened by technicians, property owners and professional men, and including a few Maoris. Shrewd, dry-humoured, curious of every new thing and quietly thrilled when I told them what we were to do."

July was spent assembling the vehicles and equipment needed for the missions ahead and training the New Zealanders in the rudiments of desert motoring and navigation. Kennedy-Shaw, appointed the unit's intelligence officer, told the Kiwis that the Libyan Desert measured 1,200 miles by 1,000 - or put another way, it was approximately the size of India.

This enormous region was bordered by the Nile River in the east and the Mediterranean Sea in the north. In the south, which was a limestone landscape compared to the sandstone in the north, the desert extended as far as the Tibesti Mountains, while the political frontier with Tunisia and Algeria marked its western limits.

AT WAR WITH BAGNOLD

IN JANUARY 1941 BAGNOLD RECRUITED HIS FIRST EIGHT MEMBERS INTO THE NEWLY FORMED YEOMANRY 'Y' PATROL, NICKNAMING THEM HIS 'BLUE-EYED BOYS'

Lance-corporal Stuart Carr, nicknamed 'Lofty' because he stood at six foot five inches, joined the Long Range Desert Group in January 1941 from the North Staffordshire Yeomanry, then based in Palestine. Recruited by Ralph Bagnold on account of his superb orienteering skills, the 20-year-old Carr became one of the unit's top navigators.

Despite the fact that Ralph Bagnold was a senior officer old enough to be Carr's father, the 20-year-old lance-corporal hit it off with the LRDG's commanding officer from the start.

"The bond I formed with Bagnold was spontaneous; we just got on together," reflects Carr, now 94 and the last surviving member of the original Y Patrol. "He liked my callowness. Once we were having a discussion about whether navigation was art or science, and I said it's the art of getting lost scientifically. He liked that."

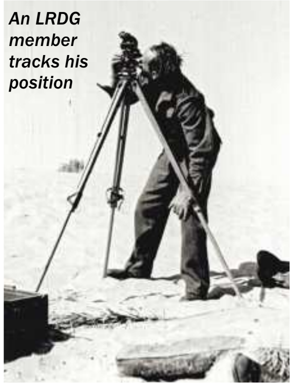
Carr, reared in the West Country, as was Bagnold, was a natural at navigation and swiftly rose to become one of the LRDG's three First Navigators. In the early summer of 1941 he frequently drove Bagnold from Cairo to the town of Kharga to a series of meetings with local headmen who passed on information on enemy movements.

"Bagnold and I used to muse a lot," says Carr. "He told me that when you're faced with a problem, you begin by discarding the first three solutions and then you start thinking of ways to solve the problem. You do that because the first three solutions will always be anticipated [by the enemy] but not those ones when you've been thinking hard."

Describing Bagnold as "a mystic," Carr remembers that his commander also taught him that washing with sand in the desert was more effective than water because the former takes the grease off the skin better.

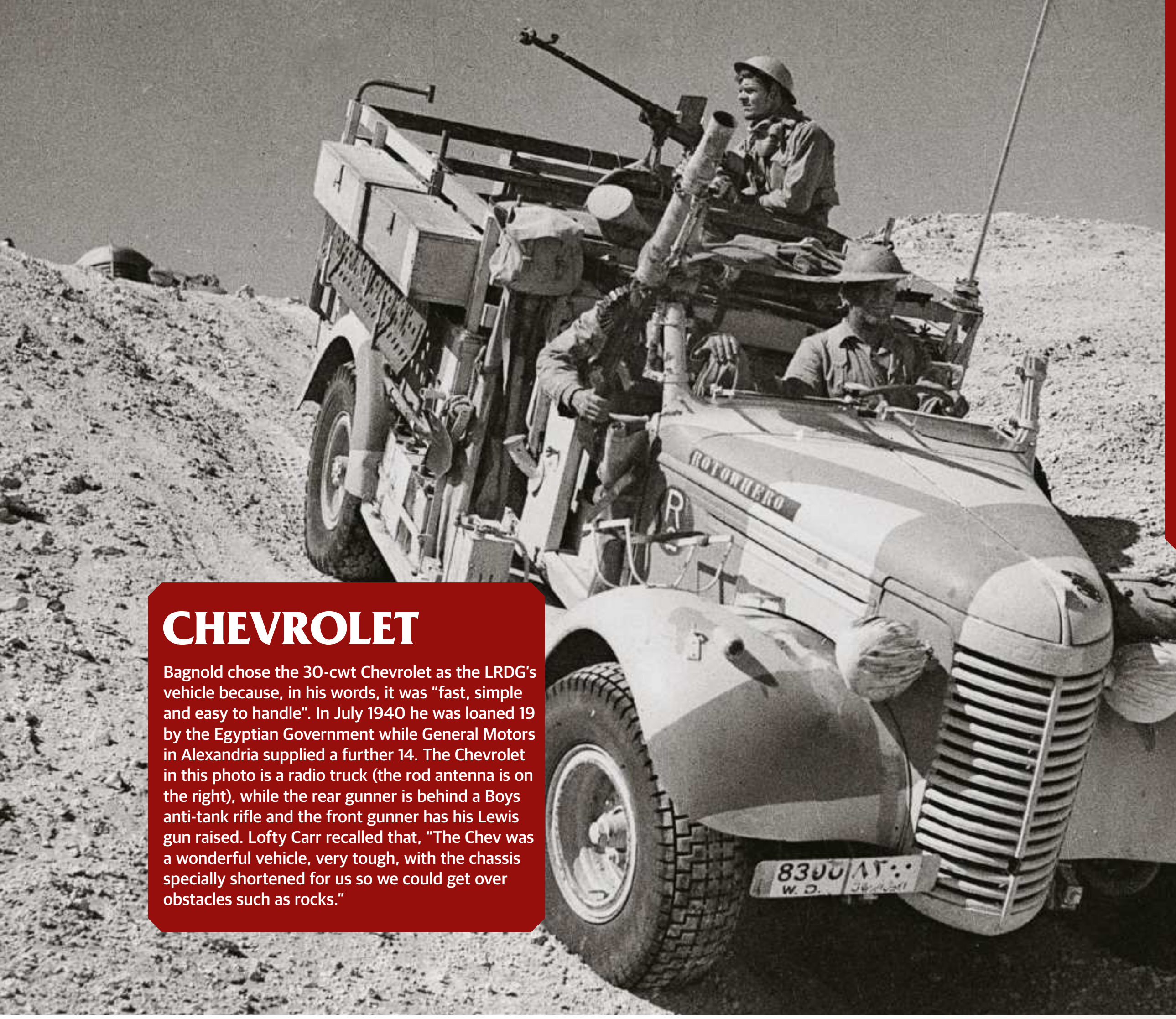
EQUIPMENT OF THE LRDG

Given just six weeks to raise his unit, Bagnold assembled a fleet of vehicles as well as maps, rations, compasses, weapons and wirelesses


An LRDG member tracks his position

THEODOLITE

Bagnold obtained his theodolites from the Cairo Survey Department in June 1940. LRDG navigators would make a note of bearings and mileage as they drove across the desert during the day, and when the patrol stopped at dusk for the night they would take a snap shot of the stars with the theodolite to confirm the position.



CHEVROLET

Bagnold chose the 30-cwt Chevrolet as the LRDG's vehicle because, in his words, it was "fast, simple and easy to handle". In July 1940 he was loaned 19 by the Egyptian Government while General Motors in Alexandria supplied a further 14. The Chevrolet in this photo is a radio truck (the rod antenna is on the right), while the rear gunner is behind a Boys anti-tank rifle and the front gunner has his Lewis gun raised. Lofty Carr recalled that, "The Chev was a wonderful vehicle, very tough, with the chassis specially shortened for us so we could get over obstacles such as rocks."

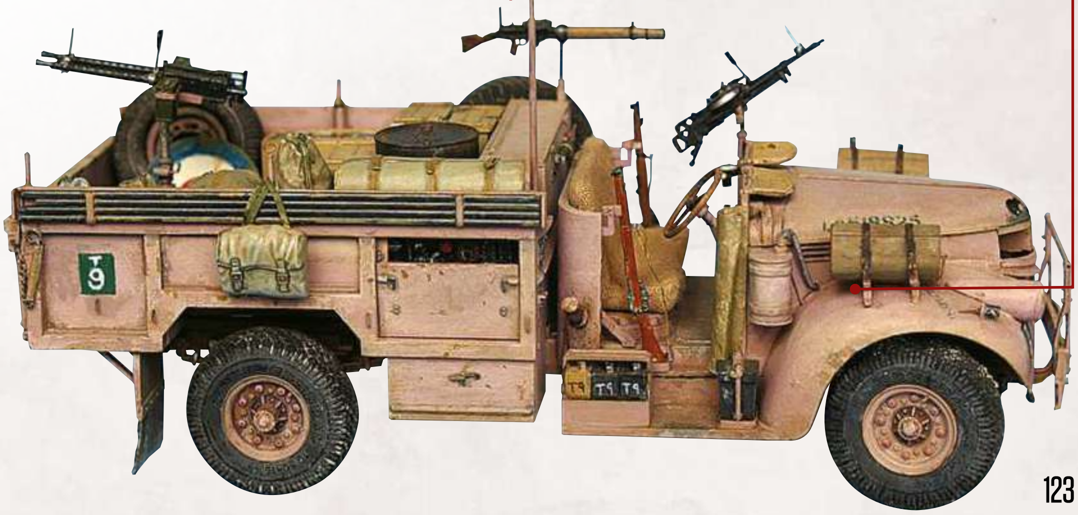
The low-friction locking design on the Vickers K proved resistant to jams from sand

VICKERS K

The gas-operated Vickers K machine gun could fire up to 1,200 .303 rounds a minute and had been designed originally for the RAF. When it began to be phased out and replaced by the Browning, the Vickers gun was distributed to the troops of the British Army and became a favourite with the LRDG and later the SAS, who used them in both single and twin mounts.

WATER CONDENSER

Bagnold had discovered in the 1920s that water was lost when radiators boiled over and blew water off through the overflow. His solution was to replace the free overflow pipe by leading the water into a can half full of water on the side of the vehicle where it would condense. When the water began to boil and spurt, the driver would wait a minute or two for it to be sucked back into the radiator.



were rather sorry for them, but they probably never knew what hit them."

Opening fire 150 yards from the fort's main gates, the LRDG force split, with the six trucks of Clayton's patrol heading towards the airstrip. The terrain was up and down, and the LRDG made use of its undulations to destroy a number of pillboxes scattered about, including an anti-aircraft pit.

Clayton, in the vanguard of the assault, circled a hangar and as he turned the corner ran straight into a concealed machine gun nest. The Free French officer was shot dead but Clayton soon silenced the enemy position, and by the time his patrol withdrew they had been responsible for the destruction of three light bombers, a sizeable fuel dump and killed or captured all of the 20 guards.

Meanwhile, G Patrol had subjected the fort to a withering mortar barrage, and after a brief fire fight, the garrison surrendered. Clayton selected two prisoners to bring back to Cairo for interrogation and the rest were left in the shattered remnants of the fort to await the arrival of reinforcements once it was realised that the fort's communications were now down.

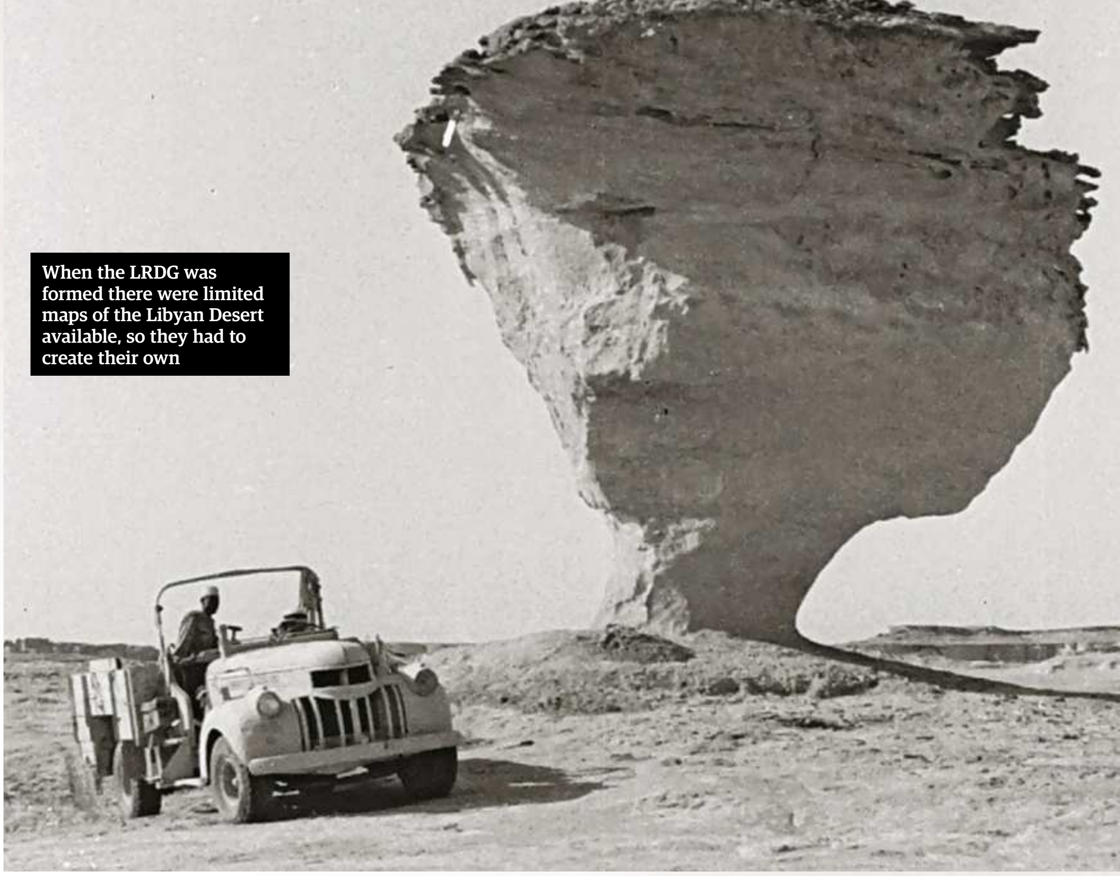
THE NAZIS PUSH BACK

Following the Allied advance across Libya in the winter of 1940-41, Adolf Hitler had despatched General Erwin Rommel and the Deutsches Afrika Korps to reinforce their Italian allies. The Nazi leader had initially been reluctant to get involved in North Africa, but Admiral Erich Raeder, head of the German navy, warned that if the British maintained their iron grip on the Mediterranean it would seriously jeopardise his plans for conquest in Eastern Europe.

Rommel wasted little time in attacking the British, launching an offensive on 2 April that ultimately pushed his enemy out of Libya and back into Egypt, right where they had been in 1940. The British managed to hold on to only a couple of footholds in Libya, in the port of Tobruk and 500 miles south in the Oasis of Kufra. On 9 April, Bagnold and most of the LRDG were sent to garrison Kufra, to pass a summer of tedious inactivity that frayed Bagnold's usually equitable temper. He was also beginning to feel the strain of command, oppressed by the heat and the constant scuttling forth between Cairo and Kufra, and so on 1 August he handed over command of the LRDG to Lt-Colonel Guy Prendergast.

Prendergast had explored the Libyan Desert with Bagnold in the 1920s but had remained in the Royal Tank Regiment. Dour, laconic and precise, Prendergast kept his emotions well hidden behind a cool exterior as he did his eyes behind a pair of circular sunglasses. Not to be underestimated, he was innovative, open-minded and an absolutely brilliant administrator.

His first challenge as the LRDG's new commander was to organise five reconnaissance patrols for a new large-scale Allied offensive (codenamed Operation Crusader) on 18 November. The aim of the offensive, planned by General Claude Auchinleck, the successor to the sacked General Wavell, was to retake eastern Libya and its airfields, thereby enabling the RAF to increase its supplies to Malta.



When the LRDG was formed there were limited maps of the Libyan Desert available, so they had to create their own

LRDG officers take a break from the Sun

THE SAS ARRIVE

The LRDG's role was the reporting of enemy troop movements, alerting Auchinleck as to what Rommel might be planning in response to the offensive. But they had an additional responsibility: to collect 55 British paratroopers after they'd attacked enemy airfields at Gazala and Tmimi.

This small unit had been raised four months earlier by a charismatic young officer called David Stirling and had been designated L Detachment Special Air Service (SAS) Brigade. Stirling had convinced MEHQ that the enemy was vulnerable to attack along the line of its coastal communications and various aerodromes and supply dumps by small units of airborne troops hitting a series of objectives. Stirling and his men parachuted into Libya on the night of 17 November into what one war correspondent described as "the most spectacular thunderstorm within local memory". Many of the SAS raiders were injured on landing; others were captured in the hours that followed. The 21 storm-ravaged survivors were eventually rescued by the LRDG and driven to safety, among them a bitterly disappointed Stirling, no doubt worried for the future of the fledgling SAS.

Two LRDG men on road watch

It was Lt-Colonel Prendergast who resuscitated the SAS. Receiving an order in late November from MEHQ instructing the LRDG to launch a series of raids against Axis airfields to coincide with a secondary Eighth Army offensive, he signalled, "As LRDG not trained for demolitions, suggest pct [parachutists] used for blowing 'dromes'." Prendergast also suggested it would be practical for the LRDG to transport the SAS in their trucks.

On 8 December, an LRDG patrol of 19 Rhodesian soldiers and commanded by Captain Charles 'Gus' Holliman left Jalo Oasis to take two SAS raiding parties (one led by Stirling, the other by his second-in-command Blair 'Paddy' Mayne) to the airfields at Tamet and Sirte, 350 miles to the northwest. Holliman's navigator was an Englishman, Mike Sadler, who had emigrated to Rhodesia in 1937.

The raiding party made good progress in the first two days but then hit a wide expanse of rocky broken ground, covering just 20 miles in three painstaking hours on the morning of 11 December. Soon, however, the going underfoot became the least of their problems.

"Suddenly we heard the drone of a Ghibli (the Caproni Ca.309, a reconnaissance aircraft)," recalled Cecil 'Jacko' Jackson, one of the Rhodesian LRDG soldiers. "Not having room to manoeuvre in the rough terrain, Holliman ordered us all to fire on his command. The plane was low, and when all five Lewis guns opened up, he veered off and his bombs missed."

The Ghibli broke off the fight but the British knew the pilot would have already been on the radio. It was only a matter of minutes before fighter aircraft appeared overhead. "We doubled back to a patch of scrub we had passed earlier," said Jackson, who, along with his comrades, made frantic efforts to camouflage their vehicles with netting. "We had just hidden ourselves when three aircraft came over us and strafed the scrub."

It was obvious to the Italians where the enemy were hiding, but they were firing blind all the same, tattooing the ground with machine gun fire without being able to see their targets. It was a terrifying experience for the LRDG and SAS men cowering among the patchy cover, utterly helpless. All they could do was remain motionless, fighting the natural impulse to run from the fire. "I was lying face down near some scrub and heard and felt something thudding into the ground around me," remembered Jackson. He didn't flinch. Only when the drone of the aircraft grew so faint as to be barely audible did he and his comrades get to their feet. Jackson looked down, blanching at "bullet holes [that] had made a neat curve round the imprint of my head and shoulders in the sand".

Remarkably, the strafing caused no damage and the patrol moved off, reaching the outskirts of the targets without further incident. The plan was for Stirling and Sergeant Jimmy Brough to attack Sirte airfield while Paddy Mayne and the rest of the SAS hit Tamet. They left the following night, leaving the LRDG at the rendezvous in Wadi Tamet. At about 11.15pm, the silence was shattered by a thunderous roar three miles away. "We saw the explosions and got quite excited, the adrenaline pumping through us," recalled Sadler. "The SAS were similarly excited when they arrived back at the RV. We buzzed them home and on the way they talked us through the raid, discussing what could be improved next time."

Though Stirling had drawn a blank at Sirte, Mayne had blown up 24 aircraft at Tamet. More successful co-operation between the LRDG and the SAS ensued with a five-man raiding party led by Lt Bill Fraser destroying 37 aircraft on Agedabia airfield. Mayne returned to Tamet at the end of December, laying waste to 27 planes that had recently arrived to replace the ones he'd accounted for a couple of weeks earlier.

Stirling and the SAS continued to rely on the LRDG as their 'Libyan Taxi Service' for the first six months of 1942, and he also looked to them for guidance in nurturing his embryonic SAS. "We passed on our knowledge to the SAS and they were very grateful to receive it," recalled Jim Patch, who joined the LRDG in 1941. "David Stirling was a frequent visitor and he would chat and absorb things. He took advice, man to man, he didn't just stick with the officers, he went round to the men."

In the first six months of 1942, the SAS, thanks in no small measure to the LRDG, had destroyed 143 aircraft. As Stirling noted, "By the end of June, L Detachment had raided all the more important German and Italian aerodromes within 300 miles of the forward area at least. Methods of defence were beginning to improve and although the advantage still lay with L Detachment, the time had come to alter our own methods."

For the rest of the war in North Africa, the SAS operated largely independently, using their own jeeps obtained in Cairo and their own navigators, now trained by the LRDG. While the SAS conducted numerous hit-and-run raids against airfields and – following the El Alamein offensive – retreating Axis transport columns, the LRDG reverted to its original role.

It was one that it accomplished with extraordinary diligence and endurance, often keeping enemy positions under observation for days at a time and radioing back the vital intelligence to Cairo. With the desert war all but won, General Bernard Montgomery, commander of the Eighth Army, conveyed his thanks for the LRDG's magnificent work in a letter to Prendergast dated 2 April 1943, praising "the excellent work done by your patrols" in reconnoitring the country.

In 1984, David Stirling expressed his thanks to the LRDG in an address to an audience gathered for the opening of the refurbished SAS base in Hereford, named Stirling Lines in honour of the regiment's founder. "In those early days we came to owe the Long Range Desert Group a deep debt of gratitude," said Stirling. "The LRDG were the supreme professionals of the desert and they were unstinting in their help."

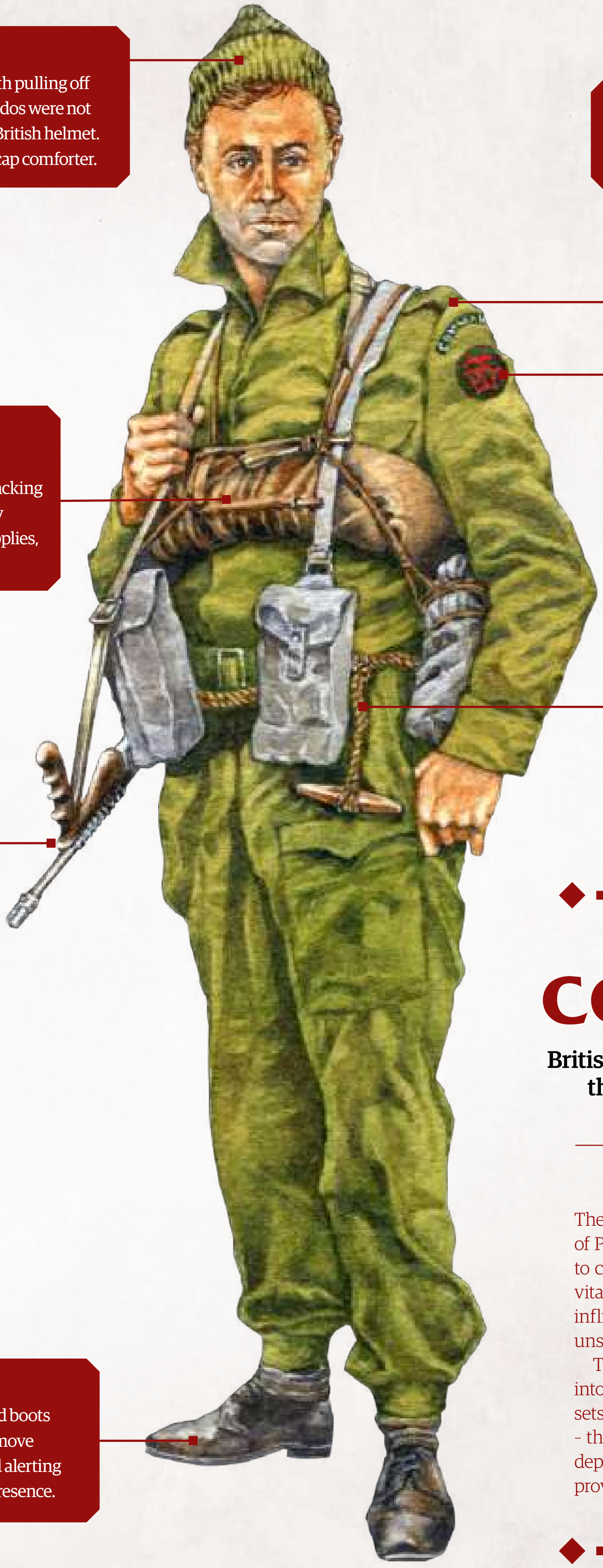
> **"CLAYTON SOON SILENCED THE ENEMY POSITION, AND BY THE TIME HIS PATROL WITHDREW, THEY HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THREE LIGHT BOMBERS, A SIZEABLE FUEL DUMP AND KILLED OR CAPTURED ALL OF THE 20 GUARDS"**

ANATOMY OF A COMMANDO

British commandos proved invaluable in the fight against the Axis powers

The commandos were formed at the request of Prime Minister Winston Churchill in order to carry out raids, sabotage strategically vital positions behind enemy lines and inflict as many casualties as possible on the unsuspecting Axis armies.

These specially trained troops were separated into distinct units, each with specialised skill sets, from parachuting to intelligence gathering - there was even a canoe unit that could be deployed to attack enemy shipping. They all proved their worth in WWII.



CAP

Because they were tasked with pulling off hit-and-run attacks, commandos were not equipped with the standard British helmet. Instead they wore a woollen cap comforter.

DENISON SMOCK

This coverall jacket was issued to all commandos and provided both camouflage and protection against the wind.

SUPPLIES

Commandos had to rely on mobility and speed when attacking enemy positions, so they only carried a small amount of supplies, including ammunition.

SHOULDER PATCH

Known as a tactical recognition badge, the shoulder patch of a commando featured an anchor with a machine gun laid across its middle and an eagle hovering above it. This badge enabled the quick recognition of a commando unit in battle.

TOGGLE ROPE

A toggle rope was carried by all ranks. Tied together, a number of toggle ropes could create one long enough to scale up walls, cliff faces and a number of other obstacles encountered in the field.

THOMPSON MACHINE GUN

Commandos favoured the American-made Thompson machine gun on raiding missions. Its firing rate varied between 600 and 1,500 rounds per minute depending on the model and it weighed around 4.5kg.

BOOTS

Lightweight, rubber-soled boots enabled commandos to move around silently and avoid alerting enemy soldiers to their presence.

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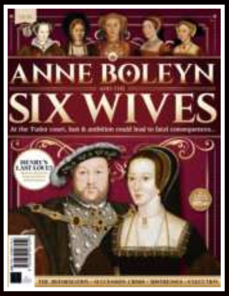
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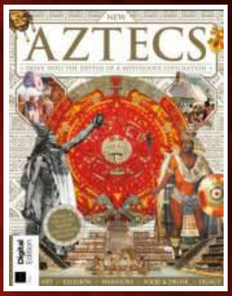

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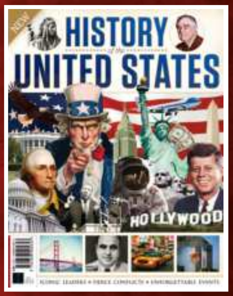
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